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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

IMAGES OF COURTSHIP IN *THE FAERIE QUEENE*

BY

PAUL HENRY DYCK ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1993

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Images of Courtship in *The Faerie Queene* submitted by Paul H. Dyck in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Leslie Cormack

Dr. L. Cormack

September 24, 1993

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who have modeled mutuality to me all of my life, and to Sally, with whom I have likewise begun a journey of love.

Abstract

Courtship is an important metaphor in *The Faerie Queene,* illustrating both the poem's drive past the reality of the present as well as the fulfilling and harmonizing nature of the hoped for future condition. A central motif of the poem is that of the quest, and courtship plays a key role in the quests of many figures, including Red Crosse, Britomart, Artegal, and Arthur. For these figures, final destiny is somehow intrinsically tied to their love for a given individual. Red Crosse seeks to destroy the dragon which is the oppressor of his ultimate bride; Britomart and Artegal must find each other to be complete as individuals; and Arthur, Spenser's model of a gentleman, has as his whole quest love of the Faerie Queene herself.

This study centers on two couples: Red Crosse and Una, and Britomart and Artegal. The first chapter takes a specifically Christian look at Book One, reading this section of the poem in light of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. In contrast, Chapter Two examines the story of Britomart and Artegal from a sort of deconstructive angle, reading the tools of knighthood as the psychological language by which a "love-story" is communicated. The object of the third chapter is contextualization, and rereads these two stories in the terms of cultural poetics, examining them as they function within the dynamics of the Elizabeth cult.

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Introduction

In this thesis I have picked one theme, that of courtship, to study, and within that theme, I have limited my scope to two significant couples. Needless to say, it would have been quite possible, and even profitable, to have gone about a study of courtship in *The Faerie Queene* without even mentioning Britomart and Artegal or Red Crosse and Una (one could as easily concentrate on Amorette and Scudamour, or on Florimell and Marinell). And as the majority of scholarship done this past decade displays, a study of courtship is hardly necessary to a study of *The Faerie Queene*. Why this study then? As a reader of *The Faerie Queene*, I have come to see the poem in terms of movement, to take seriously Spenser's structuring the action of the poem as Quest. From the opening line, "A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine," it is established that travelling is central to the poem, and that its main figures are on their way from somewhere with both a purpose in travelling and a final destination. In this way, Spenser's beginning *in medias res* reflects more than epic style. It also provides a telling image of the fundamental state of *The Faerie Queene*-- that it takes place in a middle time and space. The figures of *The Faerie Queene* have an idea of where they have come from and where they are going to, but in the mean time between these, they must live in mortal uncertainty. The crucial concern of their existence lies not in this mean time itself, but in journeying through to their ultimate goal; they battle and journey to reach some day final peace and rest, whether it be in Cleopolis or the New Jerusalem. This is why temptation in *The Faerie Queene* often comes in the form of some kind of rest or pleasure in the mean time.[1] If the key to life in *The Faerie Queene* is journeying to a transcendent world, then stopping to enjoy the mortal world can lead only to death.

---

[1] I am thinking here of everything from Red Crosse's experience in the House of Pride (a hollow imitation of heavenly glory) to Britomart's visit to the house of Malecasta, where her temptation is to get a good night's sleep. Perhaps though, Despaire's temptation of Red Crosse is the most bare (as well as the most haunting) illustration of my thesis, for the desire Despaire appeals to is the desire for finality, the desire to stop the journey not for a distraction, but for stopping itself.

Within the world of *The Faerie Queene*, where life has meaning because of what it is becoming instead of what it presently is, courtship plays an important symbolic role. In courtship we find an activity that, when successful or "good," leads to another state altogether, that of marriage. In *The Faerie Queene*, courtship parallels questing in that when it is done right, it leads beyond itself. When those who court seek final satisfaction in the courtship itself, they meet a dead end. Book One illustrates this in its juxtaposing of Red Crosse's courtship with Una and his courtship with Duessa. While the former leads him into a betrothal to future marriage and future joy, the latter seeks satisfaction in the here and now, but delivers pain and imprisonment. The difference between courting the one and courting the other is the difference between pilgrimage and wandering. Herein lies the reason I have chosen to focus on the courtships of *The Faerie Queene's* major figures, rather than on those of its minor ones. While the relationships between Florimell and Marinell or Scudamour and Amorette are dedicated firstly to exploring the nature of love, and so, give a densely concentrated view of the subject, in the courtships of Britomart and Artegal and Una and Red Crosse, we find courtship as it occurs within the context of the larger quest. In Book I, Spenser contextualizes courtship within a wide spiritual vision. Red Crosse does not ride simply to court Una--instead, he rides to serve the Faerie Queene and ultimately to find God. Yet, the difference between his vision high on a mountain and his blindness deep in the earth is the difference in who he courts, and the courting and betrothal of him and Una is not only informed by the heavenly aspect of the book, but also informs it.

As the story of Red Crosse and Una contextualizes courtship within the larger quest pattern of *The Faerie Queene*, so the courtship of Britomart and Artegal takes meaning from and gives meaning to *The Faerie Queene* as a whole. Britomart is unique in that she is the only figure representing a major virtue (Chastity) to go out on her quest with the expressed intent of courting her mate. Though this might seem to limit her quest, she turns out to be (arguably) the poem's dominant figure, occupying a major role through two books (3 and 4), and a significant role in another (5). She becomes the poem's most developed and complex character, and certainly commands more attention than her love, Artegal, whose seemingly more knightly and valorous quest for justice often leaves the reader embarrassed or angry. Britomart's quest clearly involves more than accomplishing the form of marriage. Her journey is one of self-discovery as much as it is a discovery of the male other. In discovering herself as an individual and as a woman, she forms Spenser's "Chastity" as Red Crosse, by courting Una, becomes "Holiness." Courting, for these title figures, has everything to do with their identities, and presumably, with what Spenser intended them to model.

As the courtship of Red Crosse and Una points them to a distant, but perfect time of fulfillment, so the courtship of Britomart and Artegal gives each of them (but more demonstrably Britomart) direction and purpose and keeps them from wandering. But more than providing direction, courtship gives an experience, a vision in small, of the ultimate goal. This is an experience of *discordia concors,* in which all things in their diversity come together in harmony. Harmony is experienced in the courtships examined here in the form of mutuality and balance. Notably, neither of the courtships involve anything like the stereotypical romantic-chivalric model of the heroic knight rescuing the damsel in distress. This clear distinction of the subject acting on the object is not to be found in these courtships. Instead, we find couples who actually need each other--what they gain from the other is fundamental to their quests. While mutuality certainly exists in the courtship of Red Crosse and Una, the more dynamic illustration of it comes in the courtship of Artegal and Britomart. With Red Crosse and Una, difference is ever before us: he is a knight, she a lady; he requires her spiritual insight, she his physical protection. These roles are set and it is up to the couple to settle into them. Moreover, the burden of learning to live in mutuality in Book I falls mostly on Red Crosse, who must strive to gain Una's understanding of their relationship. With Britomart and Artegal, however, the definitions of roles and the practice of mutuality itself are fundamentally interrogated from the very beginning, when Britomart puts on her armor. What we see here is not so much difference as similarity: the lovers meet each other as knights made indistiguishable by their armor. They meet as equals on an impartial field and they end up in one of the most vicious and extensive battles of the poem. Their relationship explores the negotiations of mutuality--its costs as well as its rewards. By taking the shine off of it, Spenser does not make mutuality less attractive, but more real and more fascinating. Through the violence of their meeting, Artegal and Britomart grow into love and from there, into a more whole understanding of themselves.

So, while the courtships of both couples show the drive to a future fulfillment and the unity in diversity that characterize *The Faerie Queene*, I have focused my study of Red Crosse and Una as a courtship aimed at the future, and my study of Britomart and Artegal as a courtship aimed at mutuality. There is one more courtship in *The Faerie Queene* that comes into play in my study, not as the focus of a chapter, but as an informing presence, parallel to the role it plays in the poem. This is Arthur's courtship of the faerie queene herself. While Arthur does not play a dominant role in the poem as we have it, Spenser indicates in his letter to Raleigh that Arthur is to be the poem's central figure. According to his letter, Spenser's intent was that Arthur should portray magnificence, the virtue that contains and perfects all the other virtues.[2] As the poem proceeds, Arthur becomes more and more of a presence, and presumably, if Spenser had had opportunity to finish the poem as it was first conceived, Arthur would have been the dominant figure by the end. As the poem is, though, we are left only with the first part of Arthur's quest, and we find that, like Britomart, Arthur's explicit goal is to find his love, in this case, the faerie queene. That Arthur should be questing to court (both to court the queen and to get to her court) has a fair degree of significance for this study, and it is where the social-historical dimension of courting comes in. Arthur, above all and including all the other virtuous knights, acts as a model for instruction and inspiration, the example whereby Spenser intends to accomplish the "general end" of his poem: "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" (737).[3] Spenser's gentleman will nobly court his queen with devotion and loyalty. Here, Spenser blends the private and public, taking a concept from the realm of the individual and giving it a national relevance. In Arthur, Spenser writes a knight for whom service to the queen and service to his love are indistinguishable. This element of Arthur's quest operates within an Elizabethan society whose ruler was a woman, fashioned as the national love.

---

[2] See page 737 of *The Faerie Queene,* A. C. Hamilton, ed., "Appendix I: A Letter of the Authors."

The literary approaches I have used in this study vary according to the material involved. Chapter One centers on Red Crosse and Una (or Duessa) and the overtly spiritual nature of courting in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*. The Bible interacts profoundly and explicitly with Book I, and because I have found that the Bible informs Book I in ways that deepen my understanding of the book, I have approached my first chapter with Biblical hermeneutics in mind. Though my reading of the Bible is strictly that of an amateur, I find that the Bible's overall vision of time and space lends much to Book I. Within both lies an irrepressible drive forward, a certainty of glory to come, and a call to live a life transcending the exclusively earthly view. Beside the Bible, I have brought in the Book of Common Prayer and some reflections on Elizabethan culture in order to contextualize my reading within the thinking of Spenser's time.[4]

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[3] All quotations form *The Faerie Queene* (including the "letter to Raleigh" and the dedicatory sonnets) from the Longman Edition, London and New York, edited by A.C. Hamilton.

[4] To those more concerned with the margins of Elizabethan England than with its master texts, I make the apology that my interest is as much in Spenser's myth-making as it is in the actuality of his society. Spenser clearly writes toward the center, but he does not write from it--he praises the queen from Ireland and he writes on behalf of a country and a religion struggling to survive. He is not marginalized, but he is not simply part of a monolith either.

In contrast to chapter one, I have limited my second chapter to the text of *The Faerie Queene*, specifically to key parts of Books III, IV, and V dealing with Britomart, Artegal, and their interaction with each other. Here, meaning generates not so much as the result of intertextuality, but through Spenser's depiction of the forceful psychological struggle that takes place within the text. To discuss the psychological aspect of *The Faerie Queene*, one must read deconstructively to some extent, reading past appearance for tension and energy that are not marked by normal allegorical means. While there is psychological description at the literal layer of the narrative, such as Britomart's lovesickness, most of the psychological drama as I read it takes form in the language of battle and armor. An example of this is the incident in which Britomart is woken up by an amorous Malecasta and ends up defending herself from six knights wearing only her smock. This scene, which acts to me as the allegorical core of Britomart's psyche, displays both the vulnerability and the unwavering determination that characterize her and her quest. I read the story of Britomart and Artegal as an exploration, through signs, of actual mutuality, a story that in its violence and tenderness does not attempt to apologize for human love, but to explore it in all of its incongruity.

My third chapter is written with the intent of contextualizing the images of courtship in the first two chapters within the Elizabethan political world. Like my use of theology, I approach history not as a specialist, but as a reader of literature. Yet, with the New Historicist notion of the textuality of history and of the historical nature of the text, such a reading seems justified. For those familiar with New Historicism, my object in writing this chapter is not so much to discover the margins, or even to decenter the center, but rather, to examine the matter of the first two chapters within the myth-making of the broader culture. The gentleman Spenser fashions is undoubtedly a political person, and with the extension of courtship into the political realm, it seems that courtship in the specifically Elizabethan context could be seen not just as a short-term personal activity, but as a way of life.

While these three critical approaches (Biblical hermeneutics, deconstruction, and New Historicism) are in ways disparate, in combination they allow for a fuller reading of courtship in *The Faerie Queene*. I do not find them to be mutually exclusive, although one must recognize that they involve some very different premises. While the first must find its basis in a faith in the transcendent, the third focuses on the material. At their extremes, both see the other as at least an opiate, if not a pathology. The second, deconstruction (and I use, perhaps misuse, the term quite generally here), focuses on something other again, the nature of language--especially its complexity and its resistance to intent. In the end, I see the validity of each in my reading of *The Faerie Queene*--they all have important questions to ask of the poem. However, readers hold to one over the others to their own detriment: *The Faerie Queene* is multi-sided, and is more rewarding when explored with varying tools. I have tried to make the theories serve the text, and this is what keeps the otherwise disparate ideas together: they serve to guide one through the tapestry that is *The Faerie Queene*, not to unravel it, but to show its wonder.

Chapter One

Courting as Wandering or as Pilgrimage: The Two Loves of Redcrosse in Book One of *The Faerie Queene*.

In *The Great Code,* Northrop Frye praises John Milton for understanding that changes in metaphor are "far more important" than changes in doctrine (85-86). With this in mind, I would like to explore Book I of *The Faerie Queene* with the view that the literal level is not something to be decoded in order to discover the "real meaning" of the text, but rather, is in itself a vital aspect of the multiple meanings of the text. If Spenser's images serve to illuminate doctrine, then doctrine serves just as much to illuminate the image. I am arguing for a reading of *The Faerie Queene* which sees the literal and the figurative levels of the text as interactive, a combination of image and idea, of action and of doctrine, a reading that does not privilege one over the other. On its surface, much of *The Faerie Queene* is most obviously about the adventure of Red Crosse, an adventure most distinctly marked by his courtship of Una or, alternately, Duessa. When Red Crosse rides with Una, his adventure becomes purposeful--a pilgrimage that will ultimately end in the life of the New Jerusalem. When he is with Duessa he wanders through a world of collapsing meaning with a resolution only in death. Following Frye's premise, I would like to examine the importance of Spenser's choice of courtship as a key metaphor in the portrayal of the spiritual life. My contention is that Spenser's choice of courtship is not simply coincidental, a handy way to portray his "true" purpose, but that Book I explores the nature of courtship along with the nature of spiritual life, showing not only how the actions of courtship can inform the doctrines of spirituality, but also how those doctrines inform courtship. In the end, Spenser affirms a specifically Christian concept of courtship and love. In doing so, he reveals it in its perverse form as a thing of destruction, leading not to harmony between lovers and unity with God, but into separation both between lovers and between the individual and God. Against this portrayal Spenser shows the originally intended sense of courtship. Here, courtship brings together things otherwise separated, whether man and woman or human and God. In this sense, courtship becomes a living sign of heaven, an earthly unity paralleling heavenly unity and a promise of fulfillment.

In depicting courtship in Book I, Spenser works from the imagery of the central Christian text, the Bible. Notably, within the Bible as a whole courtship and marriage are treated within earthly and heavenly contexts, ranging from the prosaic laws of both Testaments, to the depiction of Israel, and later, the Church, as courted by and married to God and Christ respectively. The context of courtship, then, ranges from the primarily earthly to the primarily heavenly, from an emphasis on practice in the here and now to an emphasis on transcendent Truth and coming glory. The Biblical context of love between man and woman may provide at least a partial answer to the reading of Book I, for in the Bible, courtship and marriage span the gap between Heaven and Earth: marriage as a heavenly symbol is inseparable from marriage as an earthly practice, both in the elevating of practice to a transcendent level of love, and in providing an earthly practice of otherwise transcendent beliefs. Ephesians 5:22-33 stands as an example of how heavenly symbol and earthly practice inform each other:

> Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the wife's head, even as Christ is the head of the Church and the same is the savior of [her] body. Therefore as the Church is in subjection to Christ, even so let the wives be to their husbands in everything. Husbands love your wives even as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it, and cleanse it by the washing of water through the word, that he might make it unto himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blame. So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord doeth the Church. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twaine shall be one flesh. This is a great secret, but I speak concerning Christ and concerning the Church. Therefore everyone of you

> do thee so: let everyone love his wife, even as himself, and let the wife see that she fear her husband.[5]

Paul's exhortation begins in earthly terms, speaking of an apparently simple hierarchy putting the husband above the wife. However, as soon as Paul calls in the relationship between Christ and the Church as having a parallel relationship to that between man and wife, the earthly hierarchy changes profoundly. He is no longer speaking here simply of the earthly, but neither is he speaking just of the heavenly. Instead, he describes an interaction of the two: earthly marriage is raised to match a heavenly model, and so marriage itself takes part in the divine. Not only this, but by living in marriage according to Paul's exhortation, the human will be a "follower of God" (5:1). (Paul has not simply made an abstraction for passive consideration. Instead, he follows his revolutionizing of earthly marriage with the imperative "do thee so.") Marriage is thus both redeemed and redeeming, a connection between the earthly and the divine as well as between action and concept.[6] Daily conduct is intimately intertwined with transcendent truth.

In the Arguments of cantos 2 and 3, Spenser refers to Una simply as "Truth," placing a reading onto his poem that points to something other than the literal level. While these Arguments may tempt one to read past the literal, I suggest that the figurative level that Spenser points to by calling Una "Truth," that is, the level in which Red Crosse makes a spiritual journey in which Una represents an abstract idea, must be read in tandem with the fact that Red Crosse and Una are a man and a woman, journeying together to her kingdom. I say this because Una is a very human "Truth." When we first see Una, Spenser introduces her as the "louely Ladie" riding quietly beside Red Cross, and while one might expect Truth to be a lofty, goddess character, we are immediately shown a measure of psychological depth and vulnerability. She wears a black stole,

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[5] All Biblical quotations from the *Geneva Bible,* 1560. Spelling and lettering modernized.

[6] Even the hierarchy so open to abuse is redeemed here. Essentially, Paul places the entire marital structure under the authority of God, ultimately rewriting the structure of power as an exercise of love. The wife should love her husband because she loves Christ, and the husband, who would normally hold a self-centered power over his wife, is called to love as Christ did, who willingly became a servant, even to the point of death. When placed in the context of the figure who shows his Godhead through servanthood, the conception of hierarchy in marriage must be radically changed.

> As one that inly mournd: so was she sad,
> And heauie sat vpon her palfrey slow:
> Seemed in her heart some hidden care she had . . .
> (1.1.4.1, 6-8)

Una is clearly subject to the sorrow of having her family in danger and being far from them. In addition to seeing her emotional state, we soon learn that Una's identity as Truth does not override her mortal limitations. She and Red Crosse soon find themselves caught in a storm and seek shelter. Next, "A shadie groue not far away they spide,/ That promist ayde the tempest to withstand . . . Faire harbour that them seemes; so in they entred arre" (1.1.7.2-3,9). The forest they enter is rich and full, including singing birds and an extensive variety of trees, but as they enter, their journey turns to wandering and they find themselves lost:

> Led with delight, they thus beguile the way,
> Vntill the blustring storme is ouerblowne;
> When weening to returne, whence they did stray,
> They cannot find that path, which first was showne,
> But wander too and fro in wayes vnknowne,
> Furthest from end then, when they neerest weene,
> That makes them doubt, their wits be not their owne:
> So many pathes, so many turnings seene,
> That which of them to take, in diuerse doubt they been.
> (1.1.10)

Clearly, the nature of Una's truth does not elevate her above the realm of human error. She and Red Crosse err together, becoming, for a time, thoroughly lost. As Patricia Parker says, this episode frequently prompts the exclusively moral question "What did Red Crosse (and Una) do wrong?" She adds, "what seems more crucial here is the romance experience of not knowing where lines are until they have been violated or crossed" (65). Indeed, though it is nowhere made explicit that there is any amorous connection between Red Crosse and Una at this point, they appear to act as a typical young couple would--the storm coincidentally gives them the opportunity to take their focus off their journey and to enjoy each other's companionship. Here, according to Richard Levin, "Time coheres with place and place with wishing: a young man and a young woman, heretofore protected by their purposeful travel, suddenly confront temptation" (6). The temptation, of course, is for them to lose track (as they do literally) of their initial purpose in the delight they take in each other. As Parker argues, this is not so much a matter of transgression as a matter of learning to read the world around them. In itself, any love that may be blooming between them at this point is good and holy, but in this time and place, its exercise becomes a straying from the right path: not only does their time in the woods threaten their purposive drive toward Una's land, but these woods, as we soon find out, are anything but safe.

Una's identity as one unified truth clearly does not extend over the landscape in which she moves. Like Red Crosse, she is subject to the storm and becomes lost in the endless labyrinth of error that is the woods. Rather, her designation as "Truth" seems to describe that contained within the tightly circumscribed space of her body. In Una, Spenser gives us a figure marked by a seemingly complete self-knowledge and personal integrity. Though she does not act in the manner of Britomart, who takes up the arms and the mobility of knighthood, she nevertheless shows evidence of successful spiritual quest. Though she lacks exterior strength, her interior power remains uncompromised and uncompromising. This is what makes her the ideal guide for Red Crosse. Though he has weapons and armor and rides a war horse, he has yet to match his external form with his interior growth. As the first stanza of canto I makes clear, his armor has been in many battles, but he is as yet untried. Thus, Una and Red Crosse have a mutual dependence: Una, who has little control over external landscape, but who has mastered her internal one, needs Red Crosse for her protection and for her and her family's ultimate rescue from the dragon; Red Crosse, on the other hand, has been equipped with the tools to exert control over external landscape (armor, weapons, war horse), but has only a superficial understanding of himself. This limited understanding means that he must depend on Una to guide him into self-knowledge even while he rides to rescue her family and land.

The relationship between Una's interiority and Red Crosse's exteriority is illustrated in their encounter with the dragon Erroure. Though Una does not know this particular forest itself, and though her limitations have been illustrated by the fact that she has been caught within it, when the two come upon a "hollow caue" (1.1.11.6), she is able to draw upon her wisdom and thus, to recognize the potential for danger in the place. As Red Crosse prepares to enter the cave, Una warns him:

> Be well aware, quoth then that Ladie milde,
> Least suddaine mischiefe ye too rash prouoke:
> The danger hid, the place vnknown and wilde,
> Breedes dreadful doubts: Oft fire is without smoke,
> And perill without show: therefore your stroke
> Sir knight with-hold, till further triall made.
> (1.1.12.1-6)

Red Crosse, however, confidently asserts the strength of his active approach, putting his faith in his "forward footing" and saying "Vertue giues her selfe light, through darkenesse for to wade" (1.1.12.8,9). Of course, "virtue" is something Red Crosse will spend the next eight cantos demonstrating he has not developed yet in sufficient measure. Una here has a greater awareness of the strength required for the situation (that more than action is involved) and says so to Red Crosse: "the peril of this place/ I better wot then you." (1.1.13.1-2).

Una's rhetorical structure in the encounter with Erroure is clearly proverbial: she speaks as one who has accumulated a wealth of insight. While proverbs can be quoted by anyone with a passable memory, she displays mastery over her words, modeling them to fit the specific circumstances.[7] Her doing so shows that she is not simply a passive container of wisdom, but partakes in wisdom itself: she does not just know wise sayings, but she actually is wise. Her actions as a woman of wisdom suggest the metaphorical woman "Wisdom" of Proverbs who is juxtaposed to and contrasted with the "harlot."[8] As Una tells Red Crosse what "wisedom warns" (1.1.12.4), she echoes Wisdom, who calls to men, beckoning them to "be wise in heart" (Pr. 8:5). Wisdom explicitly outlines the way to life--she says "Forsake your way, ye foolish, and ye shall live: and walk in the way of understanding" (9:6). Notably, Wisdom is marked by her sexual purity: unlike the harlot, all her words "are righteous: there is no lewdness or forwardness in them" (8:6). She is pure, and she will lead anyone who follows her into life. Una, though, brings to flesh the Wisdom of Proverbs. While Wisdom is present in the text largely through her voice, Una acts as an embodied figure, not simply a personified idea to be adhered to or rejected, but Wisdom as an actual person. She is able to act by following Red Crosse into the cave even after he has dismissed her advice; thus, she is not just an authoritative voice, but also a devoted companion. When Red Crosse, "full of fire and greedy hardiment" (1.1.14.1), gets himself entwined in more error than he can handle on his own, she does not judge him for his obvious foolishness, but provides him with the wise perspective he needs to defeat the dragon. We find that when he is in danger, she is "sad to see his sore constraint" (1.1.19.1), and that after he has defeated the beast she shows no anger at his earlier treatment of her, but rather, is overjoyed at his victory, praising him as if he had not needed her help (1.1.27).

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[7] As Hamilton notes, she reverses the proverb 'there is no fire without smoke' to "Oft fire is without smoke" (1.1.12.4), not so much to deny proverbial wisdom as to practice it (*The Faerie Queene,* 33n).

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[8] This contrast, between the good woman and the sexually transgressive woman, is common in the Bible, from the imagery of the Old Testament prophets, who characterized the national spiritual condition in these terms, to the apocalyptic vision of John, writing the ultimate end of history as the divorce of the whore and the marriage to the spotless bride. I refer here to the imagery of Proverbs because of its message of the individual spiritual walk, which seems appropriate to the journey of Red Crosse.

In the first chapter of her book *Of Chastity and Power,* Philippa Berry traces the importance of the Wisdom figure through Renaissance literature, particularily that of Dante and Petrarch. She notes the parallel between Wisdom and Christ as mediators between heaven and earth (4) and the development of Widom as an "object of human desire" (11).

When Una says of Red Crosse's victory: "many such I pray,/ And henceforth euer wish, that like succeed it may" (1.1.27.8,9), we are to take her commitment to his vocation seriously. For Red Crosse, Una is much more than the Wisdom figure of Proverbs, for Una combines the indivisible, unalterable spiritual vision of that figure with the attributes of the ideal spiritual companion or wife. She is personally devoted to Red Crosse's spiritual development and holds a vision of what he is to become. To her, her relationship with him is not centered on herself, but on his pilgrimage toward God. In this way, Una has a much clearer and more developed idea about who Red Crosse is and what he is doing than he has himself. She keeps Red Crosse "on track" both in the earthly and in the heavenly sense. If we can see courting in this context (in light of their future betrothal) as the active seeking and maintaining of their companionship, then for Red Crosse, "courting" Una has everything to do with his earthly and heavenly success.

In the opening chapters of Proverbs we find the way of wisdom and of life opposed to the way of foolishness and death presented in the forms of intimacy with the two women: Wisdom and the Harlot. As with the typical "young man" of Proverbs, the key to Red Crosse's journey lies in which woman he will court. Unlike Wisdom, the harlot presents a duality, a promise of happiness that is hollow and that leads only to death. She woos and courts the young man: "with her great craft she caused him to yield, and with her flattering lips she enticed him" (7:21), and he goes with her "as an ox that goeth to the slaughter" (7:22). The writer warns:

> Let not thine heart decline to her ways: wander thou not in her paths. For she has caused many to fall down wounded, and the strong men are all slain by her. Her house is the way unto the grave, which goeth down to the chambers of death.
>
> (7:25-27)

This choice between the courting of alternate women is precisely what faces Red Crosse in Canto ii of Book I. Archimago is able to divide Red Crosse and Una "into double parts" (1.2.9.2) precisely because Red Crosse has not yet developed the wisdom that would allow him to perceive beyond appearance into underlying reality. While he steadfastly resists the advances of Archimago's false Una, showing that he has a measure of power over his emotions (1.1.47-55), he remains completely deceived, not questioning for an instant that the figure is in fact his companion. Instead, when he lies thinking, he is "Much grieu'd to thinke that gentle Dame so light" (1.1.55.2). This lack of perception leaves him completely vulnerable to the image of Una "In wanton lust and lewd embracement" (1.2.5.5) with another of Archimago's sprites. He has mistaken wisdom for lewdness, and so, is about to mistake lewdness for wisdom.

Red Crosse moves directly from Una to Duessa, maintaining his sense of heroism by accepting the latter as a true replacement for the apparent duplicity of the former. When her meets her, "Her humblesse low/ In so ritch weedes and seeming glorious show,/ Did much emmove his stout heroicke heart" (1.2.21.4-6). However, Duessa, like the harlot of Proverbs 7, does not lead in the sense that Una does (toward the New Jerusalem), but mis-leads, guiding anyone who will follow her to stray into death. Red Crosse's enamoration with "Fidessa" is so strong that he is blind to her false-front, even to the point where he can meet Fradubio and hear a story identical to his without realizing either it or the immanent peril that he faces (1.2.28-45). Duessa mis-leads Red Crosse to the House of Pride and, after he has satisfied his straying sense of vocation with a victory over Sans-foy, joins with him in an interlude with clear sexual overtones. They "bathe in pleasaunce of the ioyous shade" (1.7.4.2) after Red Crosse, apparently, has taken his armor off. He drinks of a stream that enfeebles the drinker, and though he becomes faint, "Yet goodly court he made still to his Dame,/ Pourd out in loosnesse on the grassy grownd,/ Both carelesse of his health, and of his fame" (1.7.7.1-3).[9] Red Crosse has linked his fate here with Duessa. He has given himself over to her, making himself completely vulnerable to whatever guidance she will bring. The true end of his courtship of Duessa comes in the form of the giant Orgoglio, who seizes him in his helpless state and imprisons him in the dungeon beneath Orgoglio's castle--where Duessa now dwells with him. Red Crosse goes, in the words of the Geneva Bible, "down to the chambers of death."

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[9] In his notes, Hamilton points out both that "Dame" is used here instead of Lady, and so suggests mistress or wife and that "pourd out" suggests sexual exhaustion.

Notably, when Red Crosse and Una are parted, they both wander (Archimago sees Una "wandring in woods and forrests" (1.2.9.3)), and Una, like Red Crosse, faces dangers. Apart from him, she is threatened both by the lion (1.3.5) and by Sansloy (1.6.1-8), and, like Red Crosse, she is tricked by Archimago into accepting his false image of her love. The difference between them in their wandering states lies in Una's continuing indivisible personal integrity, versus the undulations of Red Crosse's personhood. While Red Crosse becomes caught in a game of ego building and purposeless adventure, Una's wandering is as purposive as possible under the circumstances. She knows that her original quest can only be completed with Red Crosse and so she must join his wandering, following him into the wilderness. Thus, when she thinks that she has found him, she accepts his excuse:

> She has forgot, how many a wofull stowre
> For him she late endur'd; she speaks no more
> Of past: true is, that true loue hath no powre
> To looken backe; his eyes be fixed before.
> Before her stands her knight, for whom she toyld so sore.
> (1.3.30.5-9)

Though Una believes Archimago is Red Crosse, there is no suggestion that his deceit will lead her into any situation resembling that into which Duessa leads Red Crosse. Though Sansloy wrecks Archimago's game in progress, one does not get the impression that Una could be tricked into self-compromise. Levin summarizes the situations of the two lovers this way:

> Though both will endure what that Book terms a tragedy, the primary danger for Redcrosse, reeling from the shock of disillusionment, is spiritual. Una's "mournfull Tragedy" (1.9.10), on the other hand, arises from her faith and the suffering it commits her to. The immediate danger is physical, though the gradual erosion of her faith is a long-range threat. (8)

Reflecting on Levin's last line, I believe that what Una brings to her relationship with Red Crosse--her deep spirituality--is made vulnerable when Red Crosse abandons her, because when she becomes devoted to him, she also begins to need his love and companionship. Thus, as Red Crosse's loving companion, she wanders when he wanders and suffers when he suffers.[10]

Ultimately, Red Crosse needs to gain a measure of Una's spiritual maturity, her oneness, if they are to complete their mission or be able to come together as a couple. Even after Una has brought Arthur to rescue Red Crosse from the certain death of Orgoglio's dungeon, he still requires her watchful intervention just to stay alive. In the Cave of Despaire, Red Crosse, in his weakened condition, is persuaded to destroy himself before Una convinces him otherwise (1.9). In this way, he can still be seen to be traveling the way of Duessa even though she is no longer with him. He clings to the way of death, unable to internalize the wisdom that characterizes Una until she brings him to the House of Holiness. Notably, she herself cannot give Red Crosse what those in the House of Holiness can: she can only lead him to it. Red Crosse's spiritual development must first be a matter between him and God--he must have his own personal vision of the New Jerusalem and a revelation of his identity in Christ before he can rejoin Una in the completion of her quest.

In the House of Holiness, Contemplation calls Red Crosse "man of earth" (1.10.52), reflecting "George," or "earth-worker." After he leaves and engages in battle with the dragon, however, the narrator refers to him as "this man of God" (1.11.7). While these two terms are not mutually exclusive, the switch from one to the other signifies an important shift in the Red Cross Knight's identity. This shift culminates in the beginning of Book XII, after he has fought the dragon, and the people of the besieged castle come running out to see him:

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[10] As Richard Mallette notes, Una as well as Red Crosse require Arthur's rescue. Arthur will provide a physical solution to Red Crosse's physical problem, but it is "plain that, quite apart from any physical assistance he may be able to provide, his immediate purpose is to administer a spiritual balm to [Una's] "greatest smart," her emotional wretchedness" (4).

> And after, all the raskall many ran,
> Heaped together in rude rablement,
> To see the face of that victorious man:
> Whom all admired, *as from heaven sent,*
> And gazd vpon with gaping wonderment
>
> (italics mine) (1.12.9)

Though his armor has marked him as a Christian from the beginning of Book I,[11] he has clearly been a fallible, faltering one. Not until Una leads him to the House of Holiness and he is sanctified there is he able to exercise the true power of his armor. He enters the House a weak man of earth, but he leaves it an empowered man of God. During his fight with the dragon, he not only fights successfully for Christ, but enters into the imitation of Christ, recapitulating Christ's battle with sin and death.[12] When the people emerge from the castle, the Red Cross Knight is revealed for the first time publicly "as from heaven sent." Up to this point he has been perceived as a "man of earth," first (if the letter to Raleigh is to be accepted) as a "clownishe younge man" by Gloriana and her court (17), by Archimago and Duessa as someone who can be deceived, and by Despaire as someone who can be tempted. After his sanctification in the House of Holiness, however, the Red Cross Knight can be perceived as none of these things, for he has reached a point where his interior condition matches his exterior armor, where he gains a measure of Una's oneness.[13]

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[11] He wears the cross not simply as a cultural icon, but as a sign of his "deare remembrance of his dying Lord" (1.1.2.2). From the outset, he is present as a Christian with an individual commitment to Christ Himself, not just an abstract "cause."

[12] For a commentary on the typology here, see MacCaffrey, 188-207, "The Dragon-Battle." As well, Harold Weatherby (1987) associates the imagery of canto xi, particularly the well of life and the tree of life, with the Patristic baptismal service--baptism and chrismation, rather than the latter's common association with communion.

[13] Spenser shows us that Red Crosse's true problem is interior in the most graphic way: the "soule-diseased knight" (1.10.24.1) suffers from "inward corruption and Infected sin"

When Red Crosse becomes one with himself,[14] he is ready to enter a formal courting relationship with Una. At this point, the earlier imagery of wisdom and foolishness which emphasizes choice recedes. In its place comes another Biblical variation on the "good woman/bad woman" theme: the apocalyptic one revealing final reality. This occurs in *The Faerie Queene* in the form of unveiling, and begins with Una. The king grants both his "daughter and eke kingdome" (1.12.20.9) to Red Crosse and Una comes out without her dark veil:

> So faire and fresh, as freshest flowre in May;
> For she had layd her mournefull stole aside,
> And widow-like sad wimple throwne away,
> Wherewith her heauenly beautie she did hide,
> Whiles on her wearie iourney she did ride;
> And on her now a garment she did weare,
> All lilly white, withoutten spot, or pride,
> That seemd like silke and siluer wouen neare,
> But neither silke nor siluer therein did appeare.
>
> The blazing brightness of her beauties beame,
> And glorious light of her sunshyny face
> To tell, were as to strive against the stream.
> (1.12.22-23)

This description echoes the Old Testament love song, "The Song of Solomon," when the lover says to the beloved, "Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no spot in thee" (4:7), as well as its New Testament fulfillment, the description of the bride in the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, in Revelation 19:7-8:

> "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to him: for the marriage of the lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed with pure fine linen and shining. For the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints."

Through Book I, we have seen the spiritual development of the Red Cross Knight. And while critics spend much time on his transformation in the House of Holiness and the typology of the dragon-battle, they tend to treat his betrothal as an after-effect, not

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(25.2) that festers and that needs to be removed by corrosives. The corruption literally rots, and in doing so is pulled off of him with "pincers firie whot" (26.8).

[14] As Florence Sandler notes, within the humanism of Erasmus self-knowledge comes only through the Spirit of Christ (151). Hence, for Red Crosse to become one with himself and one with Christ is not a contradictory, but a necessary combination.

warranting much attention (Isabel MacCaffrey, for example, says: "The battle between St. George and the dragon appropriately concludes Book I . . ."). The betrothal, however, acts as an important part of the Red Cross Knight's journey (both spiritual and actual), both in as much as it ends Book I, and as it acts as a guiding halfway point. To this point, the Red Cross Knight has journeyed into a knowledge of Christ and his grace, assisted by Una. Contemplation has shown him the new *Hierusalem,* the place where God's chosen people live in constant communion with him. As Contemplation says: "Now are they Saints all in that Citie sam,/ More dear vnto their God, then younglings to their dam" (1.11.57).[15] Understandably, the Red Cross Knight desires to go immediately to this heavenly city, where he can commune freely with his parent-God. For the meantime, however, he must fight the dragon and fulfill his other earthly duties. There is consolation for him, however, in the betrothal itself. It acts both as a promise of the future and as a sustaining present. In their betrothal, Una and the Red Cross Knight gain not only a vision, but an experience (albeit a short one) of the New Jerusalem.

The importance given to courtship and betrothal in Book I reflects the changing role of marriage during Spenser's time. Marriage was elevated to a special place within the spirituality of the Reformation as family life grew to replace monasticism as a paradigm of the spiritual. In his book *Transformations of the Word,* John Wall argues that in the Reformation, Christian love was re-thought in order to include the sexual, or *eros*. He argues that in Spenser's agenda is

> . . . the redefinition of the Christian life as one based not on the monastic model of private devotion, celibate living in same-sexed communities, and individual devotion on a heroic scale but on the ancient and now-recovered familial model in which the communion table is the focus of parish life as a family meal . . . . Central to this would be what I call the domestication of *eros,* the re-inscription of Christian love to include the sexual, even as English conflates the three Greek words (*agape, eros,* and *philia*) and the two Latin words (*amor* and *caritas*) for love into one. (85)

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[15] This is an image of the fulfillment of Paul's words to the Romans, when he says " . . . ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (8:15b).

In the Reformation then, courting and marriage become holy activities, ways of understanding God and of living in discipleship to Him. Thus, Red Crosse's courting of either Una or Duessa is absolutely crucial --the two women are not simply temptations or virtues as any other a hero might face on a quest, for in the paradigm Wall describes, individual heroic devotion cannot be adequate. Rather, Book I makes it plain that Red Crosse *must* understand and complete his quest in cooperation with a lover/wife figure who will share his holiness and his goal of spiritual fulfillment, one with whom he can ultimately share both spiritual and sexual love.

The importance of marriage in Reformation spirituality is reflected in the marriage ceremony in use during Elizabeth's reign, which contains these lines:

> . . . it should neuer be lawefull to put asunder those, whom thou [God] by matrimonie hadst made one: O god, which hast consecrated the state of matrimonie to such an excellent misterie, that in it is signified and represented the spiritual mariage and unitie betwixt Christ and his church: Loke mercyfully upon these thy seruaunts, that both this man might loue his wife, according to thy worde, (as Christ did loue his spouse the church, who gave himself for it, louing and cherishing it euen as his own flesh;) and also that this woman may be . . . a folower of holy and godly matrones: O Lorde, blesse them both, and graunt them to inheritie thy euerlasting kingdome, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
>
> (*Book of Common Prayer, Second Prayer Book of Edward VI,* 415)

Here the interaction of the heavenly and the earthly that Paul describes in Ephesians is restated, with the added emphasis, through juxtaposition, on the connection between present marriage and future inclusion in heaven. The prayer for the couple is not that they will find happiness in themselves as an isolated unit, but that they will practice their faith within the relationship, communing with God as they commune with each other. The final prayer is that they will be pilgrims together, journeying to a goal outside of themselves, which is transcendent heavenly life. Though the Protestant theology of the Church of England did not consider marriage an official sacrament (having reduced the seven sacraments of the Roman church to just two: baptism and communion), marriage retained status as an important signifier: as a representation of the communion between

Christ and the Church.[16] Communion, as a sacrament, was considered a visible and material sign of an invisible, spiritual reality. Marriage, then, serves as the sign of a sign, expanding the meaning and understanding of the church's relationship with Christ.

Canto xii of Book I demonstrates the centrality of marriage as a spiritual sign, with the betrothal revealing the New Jerusalem in faerie land itself. No where is this more apparent than in the reaction of Red Crosse. He, who has just days ago witnessed a vision of the heavenly city, finds himself in wonder again at the sight of Una, prepared for the ceremony:

> . . . her own deare loued knight,
> All were she dayly with himselfe in place,
> Did wonder much at her celestiall sight:
> Oft had he seen her faire, but never so faire dight.
> (1.12.23)

She appears "celestiall" here; she does not just have earthly beauty, but she shares in the divine. Indeed, in the words of the *Book of Common Prayer,* in marriage "is signified and represented the spiritual marriage and unitie betwixt Christ and his church." In this betrothal ceremony, both the levels of earthly and of spiritual marriage are present. The Red Cross Knight is the earthly romantic hero who has come to the aid of Una and her family, but also acts as an image of Christ. Una is an earthly woman, but also represents the heavenly bride of Christ. In this betrothal ceremony Spenser accomplishes a marriage of these two levels of meaning in his text; indeed, by matrimony he has made them one.

Of course, before the betrothal ceremony can proceed very far, the other side of apocalyptic woman imagery must be shown. After all, Red Crosse has spent considerable time dallying with Duessa before staying with Una (through no great insight of his own). And, just as Una now unveils herself, showing her true nature, so is Duessa's nature now revealed before all. The disguised Archimago will make one more attempt to destroy Red Crosse by claiming his earlier bond with Duessa. Though at this point he makes a convincing case, he makes it too late, for the time of choice is over and a moment of judgment approaches. Though Red Crosse has been guilty, through the grace of Una and those in the House of Holiness (and ultimately, of course, through God's grace) he stands clean and forgiven. Archimago's accusations backfire, leaving him on the judgment stand, and whereas Duessa was once indistinguishable from Una, she is now revealed as Una's opposite. Like the great "mother of whoredoms" of Revelation 17, she is to be left behind for the spotless bride.[17]

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[16] King, in his entry on "Sacraments" in *The Spenser Encyclopedia,* calls the betrothal of the Red Cross Knight and Una "an act that mirrors the union of Christian and Christ in the Communion service."

Once the divisive attempts of Archimago and Duessa have been stopped, the betrothal of Red Crosse and Una acts as a catalyst to unity, breaking down many of the binaries that are taken for granted at the beginning of the book. These binaries include human-God, male-female, and bride-bridegroom. (Of course, not all binaries are questioned in this betrothal. Archimago and Duessa emerge to introduce complications to the good-evil binary, but are ultimately dismissed.) These binaries retain their forms, but give way to the mysterious unity that is Christ. In the wandering of Book I, the Red Cross Knight's association with Christ provides orientation and meaning. The cross on his shield, "[t]he dear remembrance of his dying Lord" (1.1.2), as well as the rest of his "whole armour of God" (Eph. 6:11), keep him safe while he is apart from Una, and when he takes his armor off, he becomes subject to the destructive force of Orgoglio. The more that he becomes identified with Christ, the more direction and purpose he gains. As argued earlier, this process of becoming Christ is not just a textual phenomenon, but also imitates a theological one. The Christian, like the Red Cross Knight, living without knowledge and experience of ultimate origins and finality, is saved from hopeless wandering by association, even communion, with Christ. As Isabel MacCaffrey puts it: "Christ's paradigmatic life made sense of the chaos of history; Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of time, are enfolded and reknit in him" (191). Here, the binary between the beginning and the end of time is folded into one entity: Christ contains within himself all the things that he has created. Paul's letter to the Colossians talks about this redemption into the identity of Christ, a redemption that brings all things into unity:

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[17] The physical revealing of Duessa's true nature has already happened, at 1.8.45-50. While Una's unveiling reveals her as more beautiful than previously supposed to be, Duessa's unveiling produces the opposite effect:

> . . . that witch they disaraid,
> And robd of royall robes, and purple pall,
> And ornaments that richly were displaid;
> Ne spared they to strip her naked all.
> Then when they had despoild her tire and call,
> Such as she was, their eyes might her behold,
> That her misshaped parts did them appall,
> A loathly, wrinckled hag, ill fauoured, old,
> Whose secret filth good manners biddeth not be told. (1.8.46)

> . . . ye have put off the old man with his works, And have put on the new, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him, where is nether Grecian nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, free: but Christ is all and in all things.
> (3:10b-11)

The Red Cross Knight enters the betrothal ceremony as the triumphant Christ-like Saint. And, the betrothal clearly mirrors the union of Christ and the Church. The complexity comes into this binary with the emphasis from Contemplation on the Red Cross Knight's sainthood: "thou Saint *George* shalt called bee,/ Saint *George* of mery England, the signe of victoree" (1.10.61). Even though he is a patron saint, he shares in the sainthood of all believers emphasized in the Reformation. As a saint, or Christian, he is Christ-like, a brother of Christ; he models Christ at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. Yet, as a saint, he is also the Bride of Christ, who is the Church, and who is clothed with the "righteousnes of the saincts." Thus, this betrothal not only unites Una and Red Crosse; it also celebrates and makes manifest a unity that was already inherent in the couple. Because Christ transforms the believer into his own image, the believer's communion with Christ becomes a participation in the Divine. By becoming human, Christ becomes part of the Bride; by the Holy Spirit's empowerment, the believer becomes part of the Groom. This wedding, then, does not just establish a contract between two disparate parties. Instead, it brings to fulfillment a potential unity, a wholeness that transcends binaries as a global act of redemption. In the betrothal, then, the Red Cross Knight and Una experience a sign promising final unity in Christ.

While Red Crosse's courtship of Duessa resulted only in his solitude, this holy courtship brings him and Una into unity not only with a wider community, but with God.[18] The mystery of the heavenly nature of this earthly marriage comes forth in the betrothal celebration itself, as some of the glory of the promised marriage between Christ and the Church becomes apparent. The narrator communicates the wonder of the heavenly in this last canto through his use of the inexpressibility *topos*. This inexpressibility comes because the betrothal acts as the *Book of Common Prayer* claims the marriage ceremony does: as a sign of eternity with Christ. As Florence Sandler says: "the union with the spiritual bride is experienced as transitory in the dispensation of time; yet it participates in the eternal reality and shows the end of man" (154). The celebration of this deferred wedding shows the inexpressible glory of the final, apocalyptic marriage. We read our first hint of the glory of this celebration when the narrator describes Una's unveiled state, saying: "My ragged rimes are all too rude and bace,/ Her heavenly lineaments for to enchace" (1.12.23). After the ritual bonding of the two, a "great feast" (38) follows, accompanied by music. In the midst of this mortal occasion, the event is transformed into an expression of eternal joy:

> During the which there was an heauenly noise
> Heard sound through all the Pallace pleasantly,
> Like as it had bene many an Angels voice,
> Singing before th'eternal maiesty,
> In their trinall triplicities on hye;
> Yet wist no creature, whence that heauenly sweet
> Proceeded, yet eachone felt secretly

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[18] Wall (118) discusses the general movement in *The Faerie Queene* from the individual to the communal, particularily in light of the "domestication of *eros*" and the idea of a Christian commonwealth.

According to Harold Weatherby, the betrothal ceremony itself communicates union with God. In his article "Una's Betrothal and the Easter Vigil: The Probable Influence of the Sarum Manual," Weatherby argues that the ritual Una's father enacts in 1.12.37 suggests the pre-Reformation baptismal ceremony, particularily the consecration of the individual to Christ. This reading is persuasive, especially in light of the glorified nature of this betrothal.

> Himself thereby reft of his sences meet,
> And rauished with rare impression in his sprite.
>
> Great joy was made that day of young and old,
> And solemne feast proclaimd throughout the land,
> That their exceeding mirth may not be told:
> Suffice it here by signs to vnderstand
> The vsuall ioyes at knitting of loues band.
>
> (39-40.5)

Describing this celebration as "usual joys" is only partially ironic. This celebration idealizes marriage as it is described in the *Book of Common Prayer*, but it does not add anything substantial to that description. Instead, this celebration shows the hidden glory of the "excellent misterie" of marriage. For Red Crosse and Una, as for the audience, it can be experienced only as a sign, a promise of fulfillment to come.

Chapter Two
Britomart and Artegal: The Battle of Mutuality

In the story of Red Crosse and Una the battles all take place between Red Crosse, who defends Una, and a variety of enemies who would separate the couple. The courtship of Britomart and Artegal differs considerably. Here, attention becomes focused on the couple themselves and the conflict that occurs between them. In Book I, one gets the idea that if only Red Crosse can survive the distractions that take him away from Una, they could live happily together. Spenser gives little attention to the actual interaction between them. With Artegal and Britomart, however, we see that the realm of the inter-personal between lovers may be a greater battle-ground than the one on which Red Crosse has fought the dragon.

As a chivalric story, the unusual quality of Britomart and Artegal's love is impossible to miss: Britomart, as Artegal discovers, is no helpless maiden. What interests me about their story is the shared nature of their love, especially within the chivalric context. Replacing the typical search for and/or rescue of the heroic knight for the beautiful maiden who is the object of his mission, we have in Britomart and Artegal lovers who meet each other as equals and who must deal with each other as individuals. This seems to me to be Spenser's exploration of true mutuality in love, a frank look at the difficulty and even the danger of such a relationship as well as at its promise of fulfillment and complementarity. To be equal in the chivalric world is to share knighthood, and much of the courtship of Britomart and Artegal takes place, shockingly enough, on the battlefield, with the lovers as mortal enemies. "Love's wounds" here are caused by much more than imagined arrows from Cupid's bow. These lovers literally wound each other: they make each other bleed and they nearly kill each other. These actions are not to be quietly dismissed in a figurative reading, for they suggest that a level of brutality is necessary to the development of mutuality between Britomart and Artegal; that battle must occur if these two whole persons are to achieve complementarity. My study will focus on the chivalric activities of Britomart and Artegal, specifically on their receiving and understanding of their missions, or quests, on their taking up of arms and their vesting in armor, on the necessity of their divesting these before each other, and finally, on their battles with Radigund and on the resulting distribution of power between them.

Contrary to the mutuality that comes to exist between Britomart and Artegal are ways of thinking about love which emphasize lover and beloved, or, the couple as subject and object. This type of thinking exists in *The Faerie Queene* both in the form of Petrarchan love verse, in which there is only one voice, that of the male lover; and in the typical chivalric love scenario, in which there is only one who can act: the mobile knight who seeks out and delivers the woman who is unable to act. Because both of these forms deal in the subjectivity of the male and the objectivity of the female, in the initial break with these forms most of our attention must focus on Britomart rather than on Artegal. While he (until he meets her) may function in a way that is typically male, she must break the common identification of her gender as object and function in a space that she alone occupies, that of the female knight.[19] Accordingly, Spenser gives more room to the history of Britomart than that of any other character, explaining how she came to be a "Mayd martial." She must confront both the self-centered tendencies of the Petrarchan sonneteer and the immobility of the typical chivalric woman as she understands her mission and vests herself for action.

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[19] She alone, that is, within *The Faerie Queene*. For a discussion of the intertextuality of the female knight, see Robinson (1985), who discusses the presence of the "Lady Knight" in the epics of Ariosto and Tasso. As C. S. Lewis points out in *The Allegory of Love,* Spenser's "immediate model" for *The Faerie Queene* was not previous English poetry, but the Italian epic. This is made especially clear in the case of the female knight, an idea unusual to the English tradition, but made prominent in the Italian by Ariosto in his *Orlando Furioso*.

Petrarchan love poetry relies on a careful distinction between lover and loved which is the distinction between subject and object. The dramatic force of the sonneteer lies in his inner turmoil, his inner battle between despair and hope regarding the love he feels for a woman. The woman, the "loved," does not and can not appear in the poem as a subject; she must be thoroughly objectified for the convention to work. She almost never talks (if she does, her dialogue will be limited to a word or two, related second-hand by the sonneteer), and she must remain a constant, unreachable goal of love. When Britomart sees Artegal in her father's mirror and falls in love with him, she expresses her feelings in Petrarchan terms. She has seen the perfect object of her affections and she feels the full weight of hopeless desire. The image of Artegal acts as an ideal Petrarchan love object--he exists in stasis, not moving, not changing, a perfect inspiration for Petrarchan love sickness. Because the perfect Artegal in the mirror is unattainable, there is no longer anything worth living for for Britomart:

> . . . him whilome in *Britaine* she did vew,
> To her revealed in a mirrhour plaine,
> Whereof did grow her first engraffed paine;
> Whose root and stalke so bitter yet did tast,
> That but the fruit more sweetnesse did containe,
> Her wretched dayes in dolour she mote wast,
> And yield the pray of loue to lothsome death at last.
> (3.2.17)

But, though Britomart feels that she can "have no end, nor hope of my desire" (3.2.44.2), her servant Glauce presses her to a course of action in which she would break out of the Petrarchan mode and realize the subjectivity of Artegal. She says, " . . . I avow to thee, by wrong or right/ To compasse thy desire, and find that loued knight" (3.2.46.8-9). This challenge is the beginning of a new mode in Britomart's love for Artegal, a change in thinking that ultimately transforms her from the immobile mourner of love to an active quester, and even a "mayd Martiall" (3.3.53.9). She uses the energy of her powerful emotions to seek out their object: she comes to seek an inter-subjective relationship with Artegal, echoing the "mutuall societie" that the *Book of Common Prayer* sets out as a cause "for whiche Matrymonye was ordayned" (410). Lauren Silberman summarizes Britomart's relationship with the Petrarchan mode of love:

> Britomart, who takes a very active role in a loving relationship, is an anti-Petrarchan heroine. Her warmth and vulnerability expose the essential sterility and self-absorption of Petrarchan love sickness. And her uncertainty, as she falls in love with Artegal having seen nothing more than his image, about whether her love is true and destined to be fulfilled or whether it is a perverse and cruel delusion, shows up the too-pat Petrarchan strategy of making of the poet's own mental state the primary, objective reality.
>
> (1986, 260)

A key element in Britomart's liberation from the Petrarchan mode is Merlin's prophesy of her future. Up until this point, Britomart's desire has kept her awareness compassed within the realm of her immediate needs. With Merlin's words, though, her perspective opens up past herself and even those around her to spread far beyond her lifetime into a vision of the Divine plan. From the time of her love sickness to the period when she sets out in search of Artegal, to the moment she hears Merlin's prophecy, her perspective is changing. She goes from a distinct subject-object relationship with the Artegal in the mirror, to an active search for inter-subjectivity with him, to a new understanding of a universal-scale inter-subjectivity, in which she interacts with other subjects across time, and even with God, as she participates in his providence. She learns that she is not simply an independent agent, wandering hopelessly, but part of a larger, purposeful end:

> It was not, *Britomart,* thy wandring eye,
> Glauncing vnwares in charmed looking glas,
> But the streight course of heauenly destiny,
> Led with eternall prouidence, that has
> Guided thy glaunce, to bring his will to pas:
> Ne is thy fate, ne is thy fortune ill,
> To loue the prowest knight, that euer was.
> Therefore submit thy wayes vnto his will,
> And do by all dew meanes thy destiny fulfill.
>
> (3.3.24)

In this case, the divine will is that Britomart should become part of a genealogy of "Renowmed kings, and sacred Emperours" (3.3.23.1) that will ultimately culminate in the reign of a "royall virgin" (3.3.49.6) who rule over a peaceful, but formerly divided, realm. When she accepts her role as part of this providential genealogy, she becomes the opposite of the Petrarchan lover: she accepts another perspective as an authority over her own mental state, she accepts her worthiness as a lover, and she accepts the goal of fruitful marriage as the end of her desire. The totalizing effect of her emotional state is replaced by a vision that resonates out from her far into time and space, replacing her earlier belief in the inachievability of love with the newly granted vision of her love's ultimate end, figured as a tree whose branches will stretch to "heauens hight" (3.3.22.4).[20] Britomart's mission is not only personal, but also political and even divine.

Examining an allegorical strand can be an effective way into the development of a figure in *The Faerie Queene*. Patrick Cheney notes the role of "good magic" in Britomart's transition from her original vision of Artegal to her activity as a warrior woman. Arguing that good magic establishes the heavenly significance of earthly moral action, he says:

> Specifically, Spenser uses good magic because of its metaphorical potential to figure a four-stage ontology that captures the essence of heroic love: two stages of visionary experience, which show the genesis of heroic love; and two stages of active experience, which show its ethical expression.
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> (12)

Britomart's magical vision appeals to the modes of her sight and to her desire and the themes of beauty and love. This stage is validated by the interpretation of the good magician, figuring the mode of understanding and the theme of wisdom. Britomart then vests herself with magical armor, figuring the mode of power and the theme of spiritual strength. Finally, her reliance on her magic spear during her quest figures Britomart's moral goodness.[21] Cheney's attention to the metaphor of magic provides a logical account of Britomart's movement in *The Faerie Queene*, a clear line which she follows. Of course, there is much else going on with Britomart that the metaphor of magic does not bring to light, and that is more ambiguous than Cheney's pattern.

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[20] That Britomart's most eloquent expression of Petrarchan love sickness comes in Canto 4, after she has received Merlin's prophecy, serves to emphasize her humanity. Her long-range vision of the way things are to be does not always prevent her immediate suffering and doubt.

For an extended discussion of Britomart and the Petrachan mode, see Susanne Wofford's "Britomart's Petrarchan Lament: Allegory and Narrative in *The Faerie Queene* III, iv." Wofford carefully examines Petrarch's Poem 189 as the subtext of Britomart's lament.

The resoluteness in Britomart's actions that attention to the metaphor of magic highlights is countered by Britomart's simultaneous movement into gender ambiguity. In order to become active, to fulfill the divine course that good magic has revealed for her, she must live in a sexual liminal zone. In dressing and acting like a man, she risks the loss of her femininity, her own gender identification. In questing for a man, Artegal, she herself becomes like a man; as Silberman argues, "Britomart's quest for Artegal involves braving the hermeneutic gap between self and other" (1987, 216). Silberman's point is that Britomart courageously takes on a position of gender ambiguity, willing to explore the gap that usually separates secure sexual identities.[22]

When compared with the information we are given concerning the history of Britomart as knight, the story of Artegal's training into action seems minimal. Unlike that of Britomart, the story of Artegal's beginnings is deferred until long after his initial appearance in the text, taking the reader's attention away from him and keeping it more on Britomart. However, Artegal's story, though minimal, has important parallels to that of Britomart. Artegal first appears as an actual character during the third day of Satyrane's tournament in disguise, bearing a shield with the motto *Salvagesse sans finesse* (4.4.39). As Judith Anderson (1990) notes, he is completely unrecognizable as either the Artegal that Britomart saw in Merlin's mirror, or as the knight of Justice he is later to be. Instead of beauty or just ordering, Artegal here establishes a reign of terror over the field. He wields his sword as an "instrument of wrath,"

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[21] In Cheney's view, this magical process is comprehensively described by Spenser as "vertue," for vertue "unites spiritual and physical power--a moral expression of a metaphysical truth or essence" (12).

[22] In this way she differs from the Hermaphrodite of Ovid's myth, who has his sexual ambiguity thrust upon him and who defines his transformation only in terms of loss.

> Hewing, and slashing shields, and helmets bright,
> And beating downe, what euer nigh him came,
> That euery one gan shun his dreadfull sight,
> No lesse than death it selfe, in daungerous affright.
> (4.4.41)

Later, when we learn the story of his youth, we find that Artegal has been trained up in martial might, but that his training has been to use his might to establish equity. In the stanzas describing his education under Astræa (5.1.6-10), there is no separation between judgment and the ability to enforce it--the assumption seems to be that his might is not in question, but that his discernment must be developed:

> There she him taught to weigh both right and wrong
> In equal ballance with due recompence,
> And equitie to measure out along,
> According to the line of conscience,
> When it so needs with rigour to dispence.
> (5.1.7)

The account of his youth seems to indicate his success in becoming a purveyor of justice, but then why his appearance as a wild man at Satyrane's tournament? John Rooks points to the wilderness setting of Artegal's education for an answer.[23] Astræa takes him far from human society, and raises him in a cave. When it comes time for him to practice what he has learned about justice, she "caused him to make experience/ Vpon wyld beasts" (5.1.7). Artegal's isolation from human company suggests that, though he had mastered the theory of justice in his own, limited sphere, he has not yet learned to recognize the subjectivity of others. He clearly rules over the animals that he judges, but he has never learned to deal with an equal, to not act as a superior.[24]

There is a suggestion then, that Artegal's identity as *Salvagesse sans finesse* comes not in opposition to his training, but as an indication that his training is not yet complete. When the absolute ruler of the forest comes into the world of humans, he exercizes might without discernment, savagery without refinement. His wild behavior at the tournament betrays a lack of wisdom, a failure to understand the humanity of those around him. Artegal is wild in his ability to rule, defining his world by his superiority over it, "tyrannizing" (4.4.42) the field. Like the Petrarchan sonneteer, his consciousness extends only to the limits of his self-contained world--he is the only subject worth considering. At the height of his pride in himself, though, Artegal is faced with the radical presence of an other whom he can not rule. Britomart smites Artegal

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[23] John Rooks, 1992, p 126-7.

[24] Since being with Astræa, he has known only her superiority over him, and his superiority over others. Not since early childhood has he known equals: " . . . she found this gentle childe,/ Amongst his peres playing his childish sport" (5.1.6).

> . . . on his Vmbriere
> So sore, that tombling backe, he downe did slyde
> Over his horses taile aboue a stryde;
> Whence litle lust he had to rise again.
> (4.4.44)

Notably, though we know that Artegal is the knight of Justice, his identity here participates in the separation of the tournament into two sides: the Knights of Maidenhead and those who oppose them. Artegal triumphs over the Knights of Maidenhead by his "sole manhood" (4.4.43). We have, then, the explicit addition of gender into the question of identity and mission. Artegal, the knight of Justice, here acts also as Manhood against Maidenhead. The tournament implicitly communicates sexuality as confrontation, most strikingly seen in the champions of the two sides, Britomart and Artegal. The meeting between them is marked by Artegal's pride and desire to rule, and by Britomart's efficient indifference. Britomart deflates Artegal in the middle of his pride, leaving him with "litle lust" to "rise again."

When they meet each other at the tournament, both warriors are largely equipped to play out their titles of "Chastity" and "Justice." This equipping is clearly displayed in their armor and arms and in the martial efficacy they demonstrate. As Cheney's ontology suggests, Britomart's use of her magical arms and armor follows her faith in divine vision directly, and acts as a metaphor for her inner strength. Likewise, Artegal receives an unusual sword from Astræa, the sword of Jove, connecting him with divinely appointed justice and making him (almost) undefeatable. Armor and arms in *The Faerie Queene* serve to make two distinctions which are important to me here. One, the distinction between those who wear armor and those who do not is usually the difference between those who are active and those who are acted upon.[25] Those who wear armor are not immediately vulnerable to attack and the security of their armor allows them freedom of movement and freedom to engage in battle with a significant reduction of danger. The distinction here is, for example, between Britomart and Amorette, both women, both potential objects of beauty--the most obvious and determining difference between them being that one wears armor and acts while the other is unprotected and is acted upon. The other distinction which I would draw attention to is that between armor and arms that are virtuous and armor and arms that are not. *The Faerie Queene* consistently figures armor and arms as signs of inner virtue and of the state of being of the wearer.[26] The efficacy of the warrior depends on his or her inner state, and mighty weapons can only be properly used by the mighty.[27] In light of these distinctions, the armor and arms of Britomart and Artegal must be seen in a fundamentally positive light. They have equipped each of them to be mobile and to come together. Moreover, their martial prowess and possession of mighty weapons is no accident, but reflects their inner strength and worthiness. Alone, these knights are champions, living in mastery over others.

The armor that Britomart and Artegal wear and the arms they use display their practical independence: they are free to move through Faerie Land without fear, seeking the ends that they have been called to. Their armor, as their resolution, is nearly impenetrable, and nothing they encounter can stop them. The trick, of course, is that they have not been called to fulfill their quests or their titular virtues as independent agents, but as a complementary couple, working in union with each other. This is most clearly evident in Britomart's quest, for her calling is, in the most immediate sense, Artegal. Her union with him must come for her to fulfill her role in the divine plan, to play her part in the genealogy that will eventually produce a messianic queen. As it happens, of course, Britomart turns out to be critically important to Artegal's quest to defeat Grantorto, for without her he would still be doing the mending and the wash. It is in the area of the titular virtues however, that the real battle over mutuality takes place, for here it seems that the title can be gained as an individual and that mutuality may in fact be just a hindrance. In truth, however, these knights cannot fulfill their titular virtues without each other.

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[25] A notable exception is the active power of magic, which, in the cases of Duessa and Archimago, allows them to operate through deception rather than in the field of reality, thus disguising their vulnerability.

[26] Not that this is always easily understood. Note the draw that Paridell and Britomart come to when they first meet compared with his seemingly inevitable losses against all comers.

[27] Note Braggadoccio's theft of Guyon's horse and his possession of Arthur's sword.

The temptation of Britomart's chastity is for her to interpret it as virginity--for her to remain self-contained, independent of human intimacy. This temptation is suggested as early as her vision of Artegal and lies in the ambiguity of Merlin's "glassie globe" (3.2.21). Is it a "mirrhour plaine" (17) in which she sees a reflection of herself, or a "looking glasse" (18) in which she sees someone totally other? My inclination is that the ambiguity is intentional, that it is both. While the description of the globe certainly indicates that it shows, magically, things from anywhere in the world, it only shows that which "to the looker appertaynd" (19). In a world in which figures only seem to meet others that reflect some truth about themselves, what this glass reveals must be seen as reflecting something about the viewer herself. After viewing herself for a period, Britomart receives a vision of exactly what pleases her most, the perfect knight. This image, though it represents an actual knight, also represents a projection of Britomart's innermost desires. Hence her comparison of herself with Narcissus in stanza 44: her knowledge of Artegal occupies an ambiguous space between being the knowledge of herself and the knowledge of an other. To cling to this ideal lover within her head would be to cling to herself and to reject any real lover, including Artegal himself.[28]

When Britomart sets out to discover the real Artegal, she also begins actively to represent Chastity. This chastity is not an exclusion of intercourse with others, but a channeling of earthly love toward divine ends, both messianic progeny and mutual companionship. James Broaddus discusses Britomart's sexuality in light of Renaissance psychology. He argues that her physical desire is governed by her imagination, a "good" imagination in that it is set on virtue.[29] His point is that Britomart's physical desire is by no means devalued or denigrated by her chastity. Instead, chastity is the form of her sexual energy, the guidance of it. As he says, "[i]t is Britomart's intrinsically ordered sexuality--Chastity--which energizes and at the same time gives direction to her quest to find Artegal" (192).

As Britomart's Chastity requires Artegal, so Artegal's Justice requires Britomart. The justice that Artegal exercises before Britomart begins to play an active part in his quest is the absolute justice of the tyrannical ruler. As represented in Talus, it is iron, with no heart; a harsh, exterior rule effective through fear, not at all transcendent. As Anderson says, it is marked by "oversimplification, insensitivity, and simple inhumanity" (63). Artegal is identified as *Salvagesse sans finesse* before he meets and comes to love Britomart. After their betrothal, however, he sets out with no apparent thought of her and practically inflicts his justice on the land. His punishment of the knight who has murdered his own lady (forcing him to carry her head with him in his travels) certainly has brute efficacy, but seems to pull down society along with the punished, making a spectacle of the hideous.[30] His encounter with the giant displays a similar lack of *finesse,* the debate between the two ending with Talus simply pushing the giant off a cliff. Here Justice introduces violence into the debate, countering dangerous ideas with brute force--hardly the humanistic ideal. Artegal's practice of justice comes to a crisis point when he encounters Radigund. He sets out against her with his accustomed rule of absolute justice and he initially achieves good success. However, when he reaches the point where he is to kill Radigund, he is faced with her beauty and an unlivable dichotomy: either destroy her beauty or live in subjection to her. Anderson puts it this way:

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[28] Benjamin Lockerd argues that, according to Jungian psychology, this initial stage of narcissism is a healthy part of love, but only if later left behind.

[29] As Broaddus points out, Britomart had not lusted after anyone before she saw Artegal in the mirror (3.2.23). The image that arouses her affections is that of the perfectly virtuous knight, the ideal Artegal.

[30] Anderson (63) notes Spenser's comparison of the punished knight to a "rated spaniell" (5.1.29), pointing out that the punishment Artegal uses here was common to the treatment

> Caught all too humanly between unacceptable alternatives--insensitive cruelty, the vice corresponding to justice, and vain pity, the vice corresponding to mercy (13)--he wilfully and wrongly abandons his sword, the symbol of his justice, and surrenders to her.

She goes on to say:

> Artegal falls here because after five cantos of dispensing impersonal justice he acts like a private and sentient human being.
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> (63)

Artegal's absolute justice is ultimately an unworkable system, a system of rigid exteriority that cannot tolerate the subtleties of interiority, but which is doomed to encounter them. Under the captivity of Radigund, Artegal thinks once more of Britomart, staying true to her within Radigund's prison (5.5.56). Of course, Britomart turns out to be exactly what Artegal needs, not as a far-off guiding light-lady figure to stay true to, but as an active and a necessary dynamic in his vocational quest. Only she can provide the interiority he requires to be an agent of a truly human justice. She brings to his justice the element of love: as Anderson summarizes, Britomart's rescue of Artegal suggests,

> . . . the internalized transformation of justice through love--that is, the charging of justice with a significance that is fuller, deeper, and more specifically Christian.
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> (64)

The need of Artegal and Britomart for each other then, goes far beyond the matter of literary form. It pervades their beings and cannot be separated from the slightest facet

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of farm dogs who killed livestock, concluding that the knight's punishment is "appropriate to a barnyard," but not, by extension, to human society.

of what they do. Spenser makes it equally clear, though, that their relationship is not one of co-dependence. These figures do not need to be needed by each other. In fact, it hardly seems to occur to them that they are needed by the other at all.[31] More so, and more to my point, they seem to experience a great deal of difficulty recognizing their own need for the other. I suggest that they have developed so much strength as individuals in order to get to the point where they are able to meet each other that it is only their full collision as equal strengths that lowers them to the point where they can recognize their own vulnerability and their love for the other. In this rendering of their personal interaction I am focusing specifically on the language of arms, armor, and battle as it relates to the couple.

As I have argued earlier, Britomart and Artegal are vested in armor and arms that vest them in personal strength, both literal and figurative. The matter of the vesting, as well as the divesting, of armor has important significance in *The Faerie Queene*. From the opening canto of the poem, arms are given preeminence as the identifying and defining mark of a figure. We see the Red Cross Knight, before he is ever identified as such, as wearing "mightie armes" that have seen many battles, but with a former wearer, for this knight has never wielded arms before. His armor identifies him as a Christian, for it echoes the armor of Christ described in Ephesians 6:11-17. Within Book One, it is clear that the Red Cross Knight must have his armor on to succeed in his quest, and so the matter of vesting and divesting is critical to the story. To divest at the wrong time leaves him unprotected from evil and is mortally dangerous. In canto 7, the Red Cross Knight lies down with Duessa, and in carefree enjoyment of the afternoon and of interaction with her, he removes his armor. Of course, before he can put it back on, Orgoglio captures him and puts him, helpless, into his dungeon. Divesting of armor here is also the divesting of power, and significantly, the Red Cross Knight divests himself. Divesting also plays a large role in Britomart's quest, particularly when she comes to the Castle Joyous and encounters Malecasta. Malecasta, "[a]ll ignorant of her contrary sex" (3.1.47), becomes impassioned for Britomart and tries to persuade her "to disarme, and with delightful sport/ To loose her warlike limbs and strong effort" (3.1.52). Though Britomart resists any temptation to reveal her sex by removing her armor, she seems to seriously underestimate Malecasta's resolve. When Britomart sees the others go to bed, she "gan her selfe despoile,/ And safe commit to her soft fethered nest" (3.1.58). Like the Red Cross Knight, when Britomart takes off her armor, she also eases her care: "She soundly slept, and carefull thoughts did quite assoile" (3.1.58). This leaves her vulnerable to the advances of Malecasta and to the attack of her knights. The fundamental vulnerability of Britomart's role as a maid warrior is shown vividly as she is caught here without her armor on. As the others burst into the room after Malecasta's shriek, they see

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[31] And, in the case of Britomart's rescue of Artegal, the most obvious case of need within the relationship, Britomart reacts to Artegal's need with discomfort and reacts afterward by doing everything in her power to reestablish his personal integrity, not wanting him to depend on her.

> . . . the warlike Mayd
> All in her snow-white smocke, with locks vnbownd,
> Threatning the point of her auenging blade,
> That with so troublous terror they were all dismaid.
> (3.1.63)

Fortunately for Britomart, her very unarmored state shocks the others, giving her the advantage of surprise.[32] However, her nature is in a sense laid open for all to see: the juxtaposing of the gown and the hair that suggest personal womanhood with the sword of impersonal war shows the tension that she constantly lives in, and to the worst possible people. Though she escapes serious injury, Gardante wounds her with an arrow, proof that the threat to her is real.

The good knight develops the resolve to keep his or her armor on: Britomart does not make the mistake of the Castle Joyous again. Yet, this very resolve that keeps

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[32] It is worth noting here that the others, at best, are only "halfe armd" (3.1.63), for they too have only just awoken.

Britomart and Artegal strong and allows them to meet seems, at a point, to prevent them from truly meeting each other. They each have a concept of the "streight course of heauenly destiny" (3.3.24), and they each have been vested with the power to follow that course, Britomart with her lance of chastity, Artegal with the sword of justice. They share a resolve not to give way to anyone who may stand in their path. Britomart, looking for her perfect man, will not stop until she sees her ideal vision in life, while Artegal seems to have no awareness of any woman in his future, never mind one wearing armor. In their understanding of divine destiny, then, Britomart and Artegal seem to anticipate little room for each other. As their first and second meetings are confrontational, it would seem that they see each other as obstacles in the course, but it turns out in this case that what seems to be a detour on earth is actually straight in heaven.

Britomart and Artegal first meet in the fullness of strength, each as the champion of his and her own side. Britomart does not recognize Artegal, and, in response to his domination of the Knights of Maidenhead, she intervenes, defeating him. At this point each of the knights is focused too much on the individual nature of his and her task. While Artegal's strutting suggests a triumphalistic celebration of male sexuality to the exclusion of mutual "conversation," Britomart's equating of chastity with maidenhead is an equally exclusive error. Michael Leslie addresses the Order of Maidenhead, and discusses the idea that they are opposed not only to illicit sex, but also to any loss of virginity (139).[33] Essentially, the two knights are so caught up in their own tasks that they can only use their weapons *against* each other, seeing each other as opponents. Ironies abound here. Britomart, the goal of her quest to find Artegal, does not recognize him (4.5.29) and instead of coupling with him, unhorses him, humiliating and enraging him. In turn, Artegal considers her only insofar as she threatens his task. At the end of the tournament,

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[33] Both the lustful Paridell and the faithful, married Cambell and Triamond ride against the Knights of Maidenhead.

> . . . greatly grudged *Arthegall,*
> And much repynd, that both of victors meede,
> And eke of honour she did him forestall.
>
> (4.5.9)

Her challenge to his manhood provokes a fierce response, and from the end of the tournament he can think of nothing but revenge (4.5.9, 4.6.5).

In the second battle between Britomart and Artegal a steady progression takes placed, a forced and mutual divesting. As the two meet on equal terms, one on one, the power that they are vested with and which apparently keeps them apart is slowly worn down, and ironically, the divesting which is most dangerous in *The Faerie Queene* allows them to meet finally as lovers. When the battle begins, the two are on their horses, their literal height suggesting their strength. Quickly, however, Britomart knocks Artegal to the ground, as in the earlier fight, to his "great amazement" (4.6.11). Undaunted, he leaps up and attacks her as a predator--as "an eger hound/ Thrust to an hynd" (12). Though he rises to his feet, he cannot regain the power and stature that his horse had provided, but instead takes Britomart off her horse. Once off their horses they are divested of much of the power of movement fundamental to knighthood. They continue to battle on foot and in their savage meeting, their equal force further divests them: Britomart strikes first, with a blow

> Whose raging rigour neither steele nor bras
> Could stay, but to the tender flesh it went,
> And pour'd the purple bloud forth on the gras;
> That all his mayle yriv'd, and plates yrent,
> Shew'd all his bodie bare vnto the cruell dent.
>
> (15)

Here Artegal loses the protection of his armor--Britomart's sword has divested him to the point where he is mortally vulnerable. Artegal's concern is not for his life, however. Instead, all that matters to him is that he beat her. When she begins to tire, he retaliates with a vicious counter-attack,

> Heaping huge stokes, as thicke as showre of hayle
> And lashing dreadfully at euery part,

As if he thought her soule to disentrayle
(16)

Artegal pushes the encounter to a fight to the death, both by fighting while mortally vulnerable and by seeking to destroy Britomart. As the battle goes on, their equality is evident: "Thus long they trac'd, and trauerst to and fro,/ Sometimes pursewing, and sometimes pursewed" (18); however, Artegal eventually gains the advantage and "therewith stroke at her so hideouslie,/ That seemed nought but death mote be her destinie" (18). At just this point, though, at just the moment when death is closest, the expectation of battle is reversed. Instead of killing Britomart, Artegal's blow makes a final divesting move and removes her visor, exposing her face and her hair to Artegal. Ironically, at this moment when Britomart is weakest, she benefits from a transcendent power, that of love. As Artegal gets set to deliver the final blow his sword falls out of his hand and he becomes instantly devoted to her. Building reversal upon reversal, it is now Britomart's turn to hold control over the other's life. She accepts his surrender as victor, but when he removes his visor and she recognizes him as Artegal, she too "her wrathfull courage gan appall" (26).[34] The two have moved from being fully vested, above the ground (on horseback), to losing some of their power so that they would have to fight on their feet, to finally lying on the ground, helpless before each other, divested of their individual strength. Scudamour instantly recognizes the positive nature of this outcome, saying:

Certes Sir *Artegall,*
I ioy to see you lout so low on ground,
And now become to liue a Ladies thrall,
That whylome in your minde wont to despise them all.
(28)

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[34] As Wofford argues, within the Petrarchan mode there is a blurring between inward and outward, as "inner thoughts and outer landscape begin to merge" (34). Britomart, like the Petrarchan lover, has had no perception beyond that of her inner vision to guide her way. She has interpreted the outer world by this inner vision and has thereby failed to recognize Artegal, but at this point of unmasking the outer world penetrates through her interpretive mode and she sees the true Artegal.

Notably, though they batter each other into a state of relative weakness, the motivation for their final lowering of arms comes from within. As Simon Shepherd says, "Just as their physical skills led to stalemate, so their delight in each other's beauty is equal. In every way they seem ideal partners" (13). Their equal attractiveness to each other supercedes their equal skill in war as the defining factor of their relationship, and they become lovers rather than enemies. Their love, however is not the typical chivalric love of the knight and the maiden. This love comes between equals and grows out of friendship. Lockerd points out Spenser's use of the conventional romantic motif of two friendly knights who are disguised, and not knowing who the other is, fight each other. When true identity is finally revealed, the fight has deepened their respect for each other. He says:

> What the medieval romances shadow forth and Spenser presents more coyly and consciously is a recognition that friendship develops by means of conflict. It is through the fight that the two friends come to know and respect each other's integrity and inviolable personhood, and at the same time come to know how they complement each other. The give and take of the fight (Artegal and Britomart "trauerst to and fro") is essential to the maturing of love.
>
> (148)

I suggest, however, that there is more going on here than the convention of disguised friends fighting describes. For one, there is nothing at all "friendly" about Britomart and Artegal's relationship before the fight begins. The convention suggests two combatants who fight for sport, to prove themselves against each other. They are guided by commonly understood rules, and the implication is that they remove their disguise either after a draw or when one has been defeated, in other words, after the game has finished. Though Lockerd's comparison is a useful one (Artegal and Britomart certainly seem to develop in some respect, a friendship), it does not account for the savagery of this battle. Britomart and Artegal do not play their game and then shake hands and ride away. They literally batter the armor off each other after battering each other off their horses. My reading is that one of the things Spenser is exploring here is the secret violence of intimacy, the danger to the lover of lowering guard and allowing another into a potentially lethal proximity. Britomart and Artegal each cannot see that they love the other until they are in a position to kill the other, and love is definitely the second possibility to enter their minds. Though divesting is one of the most dangerous things that a knight can do in *The Faerie Queene*, here it is necessary in order to go ahead.[35] Divesting consistently suggests sexual intimacy in *The Faerie Queene*. When the intimacy is inappropriate, as in Red Crosse's intimacy with Duessa or Britomart's intimacy with Malecasta, it puts the knight into mortal danger. The intimacy between Britomart and Artegal is appropriate, but still fraught with mortal danger. The difference, in the end, comes in the intent of the other: divesting makes the knight dependent upon the other, less able to act autonomously. When Britomart and Artegal become divested before each other, they become dependent on the good-will of the other towards them.[36]

The violence that Artegal and Britomart do to each other finds its salvation in their mutuality, their coming to a balanced, equal conclusion. Just as they cannot overpower each other in battle, so they cannot overpower each other in love. Their encounters with Radigund in Book Five serve to explore more fully the role of power in love. While the Radigund narrative is rich in conflicted Elizabethan political thought, in keeping with my study here, I will focus on it for what it tells about the relationship between Britomart and Artegal. As I noted earlier, Radigund allows no possibility of equality with the knights she encounters; she either must rule them or be ruled by them

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[35] In the fight between Artegal and Britomart, Spenser's ambiguous metaphorical use of armor shows up. Though the most common "meaning" of armor in *The Faerie Queene* seems to be that of the Renaissance use of armor to represent personified virtue (Leslie 42), armor also functions here to hide the "true selves" of the combatants (Leslie 48). The treatment of the armor here allows for no strict allegorical interpretation: clearly, Britomart and Artegal do not strip away the virtue from each other, but in fighting, seem to reveal each other's glory.

[36] As they become physically vulnerable, they also become emotionally vulnerable: the removal of armor allows a strong emotional reaction to form (Artegal falls down in wonder [4.6.22], Britomart's "hart did leape" [4.629]). At this point, their ability to hurt each other physically parallels their ability to hurt each other emotionally, but their emotions go on to dictate the outcome of the fight.

(5.5.49).[37] The fight between her and Artegal parallels his fight with Britomart in its ferocity and in Artegal's gaining a position of advantage which he then surrenders to the beauty of the other. Unlike Britomart, however, Radigund is not interested in Artegal himself, but only in ruling him. She does not reciprocate his surrender, but takes advantage of it, and in the end, the divesting happens only to Artegal. After his surrender, Radigund

> . . . caused him to be disarmed quight,
> Of all the ornaments of knightly name,
> With which whylome he gotten had great fame:
> In stead whereof she made him to be dight
> In womans weedes, that is to manhood shame,
> And put before his lap a napron white
> In stead of Curiets and bases fit for fight.
>
> (5.5.20)

Radigund divests Artegal to humiliate him and to make him helpless, revealing how different holy intimacy is from self-serving intimacy. Radigund's actions open the way for Britomart to demonstrate the completion of the process of love that had earlier involved divesting: her revesting of Artegal. Britomart rides to free Artegal and defeats Radigund in battle, cutting off her head without lifting her visor. Then , coming to free Artegal from prison, she revests him in armor, making him strong again:

> Thenceforth she streight into a bowre him brought,
> And causd him those vncomely weedes vndight;
> And in their steede for other rayment sought . . .
>
> In which when as she him anew had clad,
> She was reuiu'd, and ioyd much in his semblance glad.
>
> (5.7.41)

Whereas Radigund had needed the weakness of Artegal, Britomart cannot be happy unless he is strong. She uses her power to restore him to strength, and even to elevate him to rule over herself and the kingdom in which he had just been a prisoner. Ultimately then, Britomart's love proves to reward Artegal's vulnerability with empowerment.

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[37] Radigund's wrath toward men is itself the result of Bellodant's rejection of her (5.4.30). She herself reacts to an earlier vulnerability and subsequent spurning with absolute refusal to accommodate.

The thorny issue is, of course, that Britomart repeals "the liberty of women" (5.7.42.5) in order to empower Artegal. If one is prepared to accept Elizabethan patriarchal structure as a closed system in which Spenser operates, then Britomart's limiting of her sex's freedom and power can be read as fulfillment: Britomart set out on her quest in order to find Artegal and to become his wife. To do this, she was forced to take on the appearance and position of a man--to "fulfil [herself] through an unnatural masculinity" (Leslie 71). The tension of her unnatural state is finally resolved when she can hand her power over to her future husband and can take her natural role as a submissive wife. While there is little doubt that the self-sacrificing nature of Britomart's actions stems from her love for Artegal, and that her actions demonstrate, as Isabel MacCaffrey says, "willingness to suffer the pains of love's wound to self-suffiency" (303), there are clear differences between Britomart's love for Artegal and his love for her that stand out glaringly to a late-twentieth-century audience. MacCaffrey notes that Britomart surrenders "her self-enclosed virtue to the self-abnegating role of a wife" (303). What is disturbing to me here is that Britomart, like Una before her, ceases to be present in the text of the poem once her relatioship with her lover has been resolved. While Artegal and Red Crosse ride away to more adventures, Britomart and Una simply drop out of sight. While I am not convinced that Britomart, after gaining self-knowledge and maturity as a knight, will find her ultimate fulfillment as the quiet, behind-the-scenes wife of a travelling knight, I think that the question I have raised here, if it is to be answered at all, must be seen as a political and cultural phenomenom--as interacting in the myth of the warrior queen of England, Elizabeth Tudor.

Chapter Three
Courting Queen and Country:
The Politics of Love in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

While the courtships of Red Crosse and Una, and Britomart and Artegal can be read as I have done so far--as portrayals of courtship apart from political concerns--a study of courtship in *The Faerie Queene* would be incomplete without consideration of the mythology surrounding Queen Elizabeth I, the monarch at the center of Elizabethan culture. Like a king who might, in his rule, command loyalty and provide leadership, Elizabeth was an effective ruler. However, she came to have an unusual cultural centrality. More so than most rulers, she became a myth: one that was remarkably encompassing, and that fashioned her not only as a sovereign, but also as a woman to be nationally courted. Prince Arthur, the chief example of the gentleman Spenser will fashion, models this courtship of the sovereign.

Prince Arthur appears in Book One of *The Faerie Queene* just in time to save the Red Cross Knight from Orgoglio's dungeon. After this superhuman feat has been accomplished, he, the Red Cross Knight, and Una sit down to talk and he explains his personal history to them. When they find out that he is "sonne and heire vnto a king" (1.9.5), Una asks him "what aduenture, or what high intent/ Hath brought you hither into Faery land" (9.6). Arthur answers:

> Full hard it is . . . to read aright
> The course of heauenly course, or vnderstand
> The secret meaning of th'eternall might,
> That rules mens wayes, and rules the thoughts of liuing wight.
> (9.6)

Arthur goes on to explain that love motivates his mission, that he has had a vision of a "royall Mayd" (9.13) who lay beside him while he was sleeping in a field, and who invited his love:

> Most goodly glee and louely blandishment

> She to me made, and bad me loue her deare,
> For dearely sure her loue to me bent,
> As when iust time expired should appeare.
> But whether dreames delude, or true it were,
> Was never hart so rauished with delight,
> Ne liuing man like words did euer heare,
> As she to me deliuered all that night;
> And at her parting said, She Queene of Faeries hight.
>
> When I awoke, and found her place deuoyd,
> And nought but pressed gras, where she had lyen,
> I sorrowed all so much, as earst I ioyd,
> And washed all her place with watry eyen.
> From that day forth I lou'd that face diuine;
> From that day forth I cast in carefull mind,
> To seeke her out with labour, and long tyne,
> And neuer vow to rest, till her I find,
> Nine monethes I seeke in vaine yet ni'll that vow vnbind.
> (9.14-15)

Arthur, the perfect knight, has seen a vision of the perfect lover who is also the perfect queen. In doing so, he has set the overarching pattern for courtship in *The Faerie Queene,* and, in fact, establishes courtship as the pattern of *The Faerie Queene* itself. In its seeking of lover and queen in one person, Arthur's quest blurs the distinction between the two common meanings of the verb "to court," the private one, to court a lover, and the public one, to court favor with a superior, in this case, a sovereign. Arthur's courting of the Faerie Queene, if it is to occur at all, must ultimately occur at court, and the winning of her favor as lover and the winning of her favor as royal subject are virtually indistinguishable. It is no coincidence that Arthur, Spenser's total knight and the culmination of all the virtues,[38] is totally devoted to this queen, she filling both an intimately personal role and a public, political role for him. This lover-Queen reflects, of course, the Queen Elizabeth of Spenser's world, and establishes a myth ideal to this female sovereign, one that unites her two bodies and provides a cohesive role for her male subjects.

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[38] In his *Letter to Raleigh,* Spenser says that " . . . in the person of Prince Arthur I sette forth magnificence in particular which vertue for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and conteineth in it them all . . ." (737).

Courting Queen

Spenser's stated purpose in writing *The Faerie Queene* was to "fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" (*Letter to Raleigh,* 737). This fashioning takes place through example, the chief of which is Arthur, the knight of magnificence, and the knight who sees the faerie queene fully as a queen and a lover. My contention is that in this last aspect, Arthur does not deviate from his role as the prime example of the gentlemanly subject. It may seem natural to assume that Arthur's exceptional status as a prince allows for an exceptional relationship with the queene--there is nothing to say specifically that he is her subject, or that he is in any state of political submission to her, and this would make his relationship with her no different than any other potential courtship between sovereigns. However, the circumstances of his love fit a peculiarly Elizabethan mode. While it is true that he and Gloriana share sovereign status, the story of his experience with her reveals far more difference than similarity between them. Their meeting comes not in the recognizably exclusive form of an arranged betrothal between political entities, or even bodily, as the Red Cross Knight and Una, or Britomart and Artegal meet. Instead, this lover appears in (or as) a vision, a dream, a fantasy. She is fundamentally elusive: not only can she, as a body, not be found, but she has not actually, verifiably been seen or touched, so that Arthur cannot know with certainty that she exists corporeally. Thus, while corporeal relationship with the faerie queene is the goal of his quest, through the text of *The Faerie Queene* he operates on something other than physical knowledge of her. In the absence of her body, she becomes a way of thought for him, almost a religion, a motivating force that animates and directs his being. He holds to the memory of her face, "that face diuine," as an icon promising a coming fulfillment, and he seeks her without resting. For Arthur, Gloriana is the one necessary and sufficient requirement for a life worth living. His devotion to her reflects the ideology of the contemporary Elizabeth cult, modeling a dedication to the female sovereign at a distant court that went beyond the political to the religious.

Elizabeth I, the woman on the male throne, experienced the vulnerability of the female ruler in the male world. To protect herself and her crown, she, with the help of supporters, worked existing cultural ideas into a new mythology of Elizabeth the queen. This identity of the woman supreme appropriated concepts domestic, religious, and mythological and redefined national life around its central feminine figure. Significantly, Elizabeth never denied the traditional female roles of English society; instead, she changed the scale of those roles, relating to her realm as a woman would to her family, or as the venerated Mary would to the church. Louis A. Montrose comments:

> Elizabeth's self-mastery and mastery of others were enhanced by the promotion of her maidenhood into a cult of virginity; the displacement of her wifely duties from a household to a nation; and the moderation of her temporal and ecclesiatical supremacy into a nurturing maternity.
> ("Shaping Fantasies," 80)

While the range of sources that the cult of Elizabeth appropriated from is huge,[39] I would like to focus here on that facet of the cult image that figured Elizabeth as lover.

Elizabeth was fashioned ambiguously both as lover of the nation, and as the perfect Petrarchan sonnet mistress, to be sought and loved from afar by her subjects. The first relationship, that between Elizabeth and the nation, was, according to Robin Wells, celebrated from the earliest years of Elizabeth's reign, and is characterized by the 'Songe betwene the Quene's Majestie and Englande,' a song about the accession in which England says:

> I am thy lover faire,
> Hath chose the to mine heir,
> And my name is mery Englande;
> Therefore, come away,
> And make no more delaye,

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[39] For a concise summary of the images that the cult made use of, see "Elizabeth, images of," in the *Spenser Encyclopedia*. This article by Thomas Cain studies the development of the public figuring of Elizabeth chronologically. Another good reference is Robin Wells's *Spenser's* Faerie Queene *and the Cult of Elizabeth*. Note especially the index, p. 175, for a list of figures and roles used in cult imagery.

> Swete Bessie! give me thy hande.

To which Elizabeth replies:

> Here is my hand,
> My dere lover Englande,
> I am thine both with mind and hart,
> For ever to endure,
> Thou maiest be sure,
> Untill death us two do part.
>
> (Wells, 87)

Elizabeth sanctioned this image of herself, proclaiming that her coronation ring would act as her wedding band, that she was married to the state.[40] While this image of Elizabeth shows her as a dedicated, wifely figure, she also fashioned herself and was fashioned as the sexually aloof sonnet mistress--the object of adoration and dedication, sexually tantalizing, but also inspiring. Walter Ralegh, in a commendatory sonnet to *The Faerie Queene,* declares that Spenser's faerie queene has surpassed Petrarch's Laura: "Me thought I saw the grave where *Laura* lay" (739). Thomas Cain says:

> . . . the cult of the Queen as focus of erotic devotion was essentially a matter of court etiquette, one aspect of a game of sexual politics that Elizabeth played with her courtiers.
>
> (236)

Within the imagery of the cult of Elizabeth (in which *The Faerie Queene* played an important part), Elizabeth became, among many other things, a woman whom every "gentleman" could seem to court.[41]

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[40] Frances Teague, in her article "Queen Elizabeth and Her Speeches," points out that this speech exists in two versions: the cameral version which records the queen's response to a delegation sent from parliament; and a second version, read out four days later in parliament itself. The version refered to above is the cameral version (72-73).

[41] S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies describe the courtship game of Elizabeth:

> . . . it was during that brief period of maidenly promise before a marriage contract was arranged that pledges could be made without any expectation of consumation; it was an interlude when women were neither daughter nor wife, when they could entice, inveigle, tantalise and cajole without the threat of repurcussion. For Elizabeth I, however, the time of 'courtship' extended from her accession, when marriage was first talked of by her advisors, until her death forty-five years later. During this time she had full mastered the art of manipulating her image as the "Virgin Queen', so that she appeared perpetually youthful, even perpetually desirable, in the marriage stakes of Europe. (14)

Within the framework of Arthur's pursuit of Gloriana in *The Faerie Queene,* Spenser provides many images of Elizabeth. Of these "mirrours more than one" (3. Proem.5) he shapes some as actual women, unlike Gloriana in that they are physically present and can be actively courted. In keeping with the earlier parts of this study, those women whom I will examine here are Una and Britomart. These two characters differ greatly from each other, reflecting very different aspects of Elizabeth's public image. In contrast to Britomart, Una is fundamentally passive, that is, what she does is far less important than who she is. The success of her mission lies in her ability to inspire and to guide the active male companion. More than this, she provides the spiritual virtue necessary for the active male to conquer evil. When she acts, she acts in order to move the male: she rides to Gloriana's court in order to request help; she rides alongside the Red Cross Knight to advise him and guide him through his battle with Erroure (1.1.12-28); she brings Arthur to the Red Cross Knight's aid (1.7.28); she prevents the Red Cross Knight from killing himself in the Cave of Despaire (1.9.52); she brings the Red Cross Knight to the House of Holiness (1.10); and she prays for the Red Cross Knight as he battles the dragon (1.12.32). Significantly, though the Red Cross Knight is the central active character of Book I, his activity stems from, is guided by, and leads to Una. She is the helpless maiden who originally motivates his quest, as well as the vision of the fulfillment of that quest. From the point that the Red Cross Knight "earnestly opportunes" (*A Letter,* 738) that he might be the knight to save her, his world is defined in terms of her, by her saving presence or by her disastrous absence.

As Douglas Brooks-Davies points out, Una's name, from Latin, means "oneness" (704). He goes on to say that "Una is the principle of indivisibility, Truth in its philosophical and religious aspects" (705). Una, then, represents a central organizing principle; she is a manifestation of unity and concord, a figure to form the basis for a balanced, righteous life and a peaceful, united society. The Una of *The Faerie Queene* was of course, only a thinly veiled mirror of the other Una, Elizabeth. As Wells says, "[t]he character who is most obviously intended to 'shadow' Elizabeth is Una" (31). The name "Una" itself was used as a "cult name for Elizabeth, the one supreme governor of the Church of England" (Brooks-Davies, 705). Elizabeth was mythologized as the queen who brought all things in her realm to unity and peace, not as a warrior king would, by actively conquering and controlling his realm, but by being, as Una suggests, the one constant virtuous point of political and religious stability in the country.[42] According to and because of the mythologizing, the very being of Elizabeth made her rule work. A. Bartlett Giamatti argues that the mythologizing of Elizabeth in this way allowed that "what she wanted most--that nothing essentially change in England--might be accomplished by her own untiring, absolute presence" (325). He explains her mythical presence this way:

> All the roles she played were Gloriana, the single, sole and abiding fountainhead and goal of Unity. She *was* the grand idea: division--of religion and party and blood and region and level of society--would be in her healed into oneness, and that from her transcendent oneness would come her awesome force, the tremendous power to draw all to her and to make all wish to be reconciled and reformed by her. Her people's hunger for unity became the celestial bargain: they would believe she embodied their ideal and submit, if she would deny everything except their need and thereby weld them together.
>
> (324-5)

Whether or not one can speak so widely of "her people" having a simple bi-lateral arrangement with Elizabeth, it remains that Giamatti's explanation aptly describes the figure of Elizabeth that Spenser is shaping in Una. The role that the Red Cross Knight plays in Book I has much to do with shaping the Elizabethan reader's attitude toward his queen. With the revelation in canto ten that the Red Cross Knight is in fact St. George, the patron saint of England, we realize by extension that England itself courts the Una figure. Other details of the St. George story also add meaning to what happens in the relationship between the Red Cross Knight and Una. Robert Kellogg points out that "[w]ell before Spenser's time, the legends of St. George had assimilated the myth of

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[42] This is reflected in her motto, *semper eadem* (always the same).

Perseus, in which the hero rescues a king's daughter from a devouring monster" (588). As unshakeable, as unchanging as Una is, she still requires the intervening action of a gentleman-knight. One message here is that this central defining figure on which all of her society is based is still a woman, still requiring male loyalty and protection from evil forces which would devour her body. Paradoxically of course, the very virginal purity which makes Una vulnerable also inspires and spiritually empowers her defence. When the Red Cross Knight separates himself from Una he weakens himself and is vulnerable to Duessa, Orgoglio, and Despaire. However, as long as the Red Cross Knight remains united to Truth, he not only cannot be defeated, but also gains the strength successfully to remove the threat to Una.

While the Red Cross Knight fights the dragon in Book One, canto eleven, Una waits in her tower, watching and praying. This image of virtue in stillness, the vulnerable virgin wielding sway over the battle below through the power of her purity, has an actual world parallel in George Gower's *Armada Portrait of Queen Elizabeth.* In the portrait, Elizabeth is seated in a room with two windows in the background, one on either side of her. The window to the queen's right displays the Spanish Armada approaching in tight formation, but about to be attacked by fire tugs from the French coast as well as by the English ships which wait in the foreground, flying the standard of St. George. The window to her left shows the Armada in the throes of the storm which destroyed it.[43] As Montrose points out, Elizabeth, in the center of the portrait, wears a dress that acts as an icon of her virginity:

> In the appropriate spot, at the apex of the inverted triangle formed by her stomacher, the beholder's attention is drawn to an ostentatious bow. Resting upon it are a rich jewel in an elaborate setting and a large teardrop pearl pendant, both of which are attached to a girdle that is also composed of jewels and pearls.
>
> ("Elizabethan Subject," 315)

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[43] For an explanation as well as a copy of the portrait, see Thomas Cain, p. 237 and accompanying figure.

As Montrose argues, the portrait implies a causal relationship between Elizabeth's virginity and the defeat of the Spanish. From the perspective of the portrait, Elizabeth is central to the action--the events of this major military action seem to revolve around her. And, while the Armada actually posed a grave threat to her kingdom and her rule, in the picture she sits demurely, full of grace and peace, her hand resting on a globe. Though she is vulnerable to the immediate danger outside, her virtue, represented by her virgin knot, ties her into divine providence. She is the point of contact between her navy and God, interceding, like Una, on behalf of those who would fight for her.[44]

The figure of spiritually active but inwardly passive virtue that we see in Una is only one side of Elizabeth's cult image, however, and the attempted invasion by the Armada occasioned not only the public image shown above, but also the image of Elizabeth as a warrior queen. Simon Shepherd writes about Elizabeth's fancy-dress visit to Tilbury in August 1588 to encourage her troops as they prepared to resist the Spanish. He notes that:

> When Heywood describes it [the visit] some years later he brings out the sense of political play-acting: Elizabeth was 'habited like an Amazonian Queene, Buskind and plumed, having a golden Truncheon, Gantlet, and Gorget; Armes sufficient to expresse her high and magnanamous spirit.'[45]

As much as Elizabeth could fashion herself in the roles of women, it remained that she was still a ruler and needed to exert herself as such. In her speech at Tilbury she said

> I am come among you at this time, not as for my recreation or sport, but being resolved, in the midst and the heat of the battle, to live or die amongst you all; to lay down, for my God, and for my kingdom, and for my people, my honor and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a

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[44] The *Armada Portrait* bears an immediate resemblance to the dragon battle in Book I not only in the prominence of St. George imagery (both RCK and the English navy battle under the sign of the red cross), but also in the colors worn by the virgin in the tower. Both Elizabeth and Una wear Elizabeth's royal colors: black and white (FQ 1.4).

[45] Thomas Heywood, *The Exemplary Lives and Memorable Acts of Nine the Most Worthy Women of the World,* London, 1640, p 211. Quoted in Shepherd, 1981, p. 22.

> king, and of a king of England too.
>
> (Osborne, 11).[46]

Elizabeth, though she appears a woman on the outside, has a warrior's heart. Of course, the central warrior woman of *The Faerie Queene* is Britomart. In Britomart, Spenser makes the warrior within Elizabeth explicit. She is a woman, the daughter of a king, and she is a knight, not defeatable in battle. Like Una, she is a maiden, but her other, warlike, side seems most unmaidenly. In Britomart, Spenser tackles the contradiction of the "mayd Martiall" head on. He writes a character who is simultaneously fully a woman and fully a knight. He does this by creating *The Faerie Queene's* most developed figure, a character who embodies the paradoxes of Elizabeth, representing one gender by her outward appearance and the other by her inner reality. While in the Tilbury speech Elizabeth fashions herself as outwardly female ("the body of a woman"), but inwardly male ("the heart of a king"), in Britomart, Spenser seems to reverse this order by making her outward appearance male, but underneath her armor, female.[47] In fact, Spenser does not so much effect a reversal here as recast Elizabeth in a world in which it is possible for a woman to act on her "kingly heart" and take up arms. What Elizabeth, according to Heywood, did in show at Tilbury, Spenser fashions her doing in actuality within the world of *The Faerie Queene*. Without her armor, Britomart fits the description that Elizabeth gives herself: the body of a woman with the heart of a king. In Britomart, then, we have the figuration of the concept of Elizabeth as warrior queen, the political reality of the strong woman leader lived out in actual terms. While at Tilbury Elizabeth said that she herself would "take up arms," within *The Faerie Queene* popular idea becomes a real knight.[48]

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[46] Frances Teague cautions against placing too much emphasis on the Tilbury speech alone, because it is less historically verifiable than the speeches of Elizabeth recorded in parliament (67-9). While her warning needs to be heeded, my concern here is not to create as accurate as possible a picture of the queen as an individual (which is Teague's stated purpose), but to discuss the fashioning of her public image. If the Tilbury speech is, as Spenser's poem, a fiction, it has been a popular one and has participated in the mythology of the queen.

[47] The idea of Elizabeth as a person blending the qualities of male and female did not begin with her rule. Rather, she was given an extensive humanist education by a leading Renaisance scholar, Roger Ascham, who in 1550 wrote to a friend saying of Elizabeth: "She has just passed her sixteenth birthday and shows such dignity and gentleness as are wonderful at her age and in her rank. Her study of true religion and learning is most eager. Her mind has no womanly weakness, her perseverance is equal to that of a man, and her memory long keeps what it quickly picks up" (Margaret King, 1991).

What Spenser does with this actualization of Elizabeth the Woman Warrior, though, bears investigation. In Britomart we are given *The Faerie Queene's* best knight. Until her final battle with Artegal, which is very much a mutual battering, she is never beaten, and is only once unhorsed.[49] While she is on her quest, she displays all the composure and quiet confidence of the faerie queene herself--she steadfastly takes on any opponent, knocking down the previously unbeaten Marinell and proceeding without a backwards glance, fighting on behalf of the beaten knights of maidenhead and singlehandedly triumphing over all of the knights who oppose them, and venturing bravely into the house of Busirane (where Scudamour was unable to enter), through all of its dangers and horrors, to rescue Amorette. This overmastering martial prowess is, of course, necessary if Spenser is to reflect the ruler of England, for England, if it was to remain sovereign, needed an indominable leader at its center. The problem with a strong queen, however, was the great cultural fear of an overmastering woman leader. John Knox, in his *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women,* shaped rule by a woman as an Amazonian tyranny, saying that if the ancient writers were to see a woman ruling over parliament, "they shuld iudge the hole worlde to be transformed into Amazones."[50] Elizabeth clearly could not afford to be seen, as the Amazons, to be a woman usurping the power and role of a man, and not acting as a woman.

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[48] Spenser does not simply put Britomart into armor, though. Rather, she wears the armor of the Saxon warrior Angela. Thomas Roche describes its significance this way:

> . . . the armor of this Saxon warrior, the best example of her people, becomes the protection of Britomart in her search for Arthegal and a symbol of the eventual unity of the best of Saxon and Britain in that greater warrior and queen, Elizabeth. (62)

This armor is combined with the lance that Britomart uses, which is British. She is empowered by the instruments of both nations as she sets out on her quest to find Artegal and, thereby, to bring about the eventual unity of the two nations in Elizabeth. Michael O'Connell adds:

> At the beginning of the conflict of Britons and Saxons, Britomart is a prophetic image of its final resolution in the queen whose fictional ancestor she is. Both Britomart and Elizabeth are embodiments of *discordia concors* : Britomart early, fictional, and prophetic; Elizabeth present, actual, and fulfilling. (84)

Thus, Britomart is both a figure and a pre-figure of Elizabeth. She acts as a prophetic model that Elizabeth will fulfill.

[49] Against Paridell, when she also unhorses him.

Elizabeth defended herself against labelling as a usurper of men's power and role by claiming, as I talked about earlier, the traditional roles of women in her rule. She would reshape the role of the monarch from that of the patriarch overlord, to that of the matriarch, watching over her nation-household with love.[51] As she said, again in the Tilbury speech, "I have always behaved myself, that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good-will of my subjects" (Osborne, 11). Elizabeth's strength as a female ruler then, was in fashioning herself as vulnerable, as a woman was supposed to be. For all her might, she was still a woman who needed to be courted, respected, and protected. Spenser represents this sense of the woman who is at once magnificently invulnerable and at the same time profoundly vulnerable in the figure of Britomart. Britomart may be the mightiest warrior in *The Faerie Queene,* but this fact must be contextualized by the question of why she is a warrior at all. From the beginning it is absolutely clear that Britomart becomes a knight because she is in love with Artegal and must find him. She, this most exceptional woman, takes on the semblance, the outer role of a man, in order that she might ultimately fulfill her role as a wife and a mother.[52]

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[50] Knox, 1878 edition, p.13; quoted in Shepherd, p.22.

[51] Sir Thomas Smith, in his *Common-welth of England* (1589), a discussion of proper governance, discusses women only in the context of the household:

> Then if this be a society, and consisteth onely of freeman, the least part therof must be of two. The naturelest, and, first conjunction of two . . . is of the husband and of the wife, after a divers sort, each having care of the familie: the man to get, to travaile abroade, to defend: the wife, to save what is gotten, to tarrie at home, to distribute that which commeth of the husbandes labor, for the nutriture of the children, and family of them both, and to keepe all at home neate and cleane. (sig. C2, quoted in Woods, 142-3)

From the first canto of Britomart's adventure in *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser displays the paradox of Britomart's situation and the delicate balance between being the woman and playing the man. As discussed in Chapter Two, the incident when Britomart must defend herself in Malecasta's castle gives a vivid image of her and, by extension, Elizabeth's situation. Britomart must face the knights of Malecasta when she is unprepared, and thus we see her true nature. To quote again, we see her "All in her snow-white smocke, with locks vnbownd,/ Threatning the point of her auenging blade" (3.1.63). As with Una, Britomart's virginal purity is represented by the pure white clothes that she wears underneath her outer garments, and we see that she is indeed a maiden--a good English maiden, and not an Amazon after all. Moreover, we see that she uses her sword not simply as a means of mastering men, but in a primarily defensive role. This encounter sets the model for her subsequent battles: what is explicit here--that she fights to defend her virgin body from violent attack--is implicit hereafter. She is Chastity and she battles not to upend accepted values, but to uphold them.

One can see that the creation of a warrior woman who repesents and fights on behalf of the traditional idea of woman is a very tricky business and probably not one that is possible to resolve satisfyingly. As Margaret King puts it, Britomart fights to "uphold the male values" that her "very existence would seem to threaten" (189). Indeed, that fact that Britomart fights at all fundamentally rewrites traditional concepts of what a woman should be, no matter what it is that she fights for. To some extent, this is simply the Elizabethan paradox: she will claim to fill both the roles of king and of queen at once, to be both father and mother, both warrior and maiden. Spenser, however, does not shy away from the problem, but confronts it head on. If a fear lingers that within Britomart's armor somewhere lurks an Amazon, he attacks it by bringing Radigund into his world.

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[52] See Chapter Two of this thesis for an extended discussion of her quest.

Montrose's claim, that "Radigund is Britomart's double, split off from her as an allegorical personification of everything in Artegall's beloved that threatens him" ("Shaping Fantasies," 78), is well-founded. The parallels between the two are obvious: they are the only two woman warriors that appear in *The Faerie Queene,* and they both are very effective fighters. More particularly, they both battle Artegal and fall beneath his blows, only to have their faces revealed and Artegal submit to their beauty. Though they are so similar, however, they represent opposite poles of right and wrong. For Spenser, Radigund is an unnatural woman:

> Such is the crueltie of womenkynd,
> When they haue shaken off the shamefast band,
> With which wise Nature dd them strongly bynd,
> T'obay the heasts of mans well ruling hand,
> That then all rule and reason they withstand,
> To purchase a licentious libertie.
> But vertuous women wisely vnderstand,
> That they were borne to base humilitie,
> Vnlesse the heuens them lift to lawfull soueraintie.
>
> (5.5.25)

Radigund uses her power to usurp the rightful position and power of men, to replace them and, by doing so, overturn accepted hierarchy. When she gains control over Artegal with her beauty, she does not respect his admiration for her, but takes advantage of it, making him into her vassal and putting him to work, not as a knight, but as a female labourer, spinning linen (5.5.25.9). This acts out the danger in Artegal's love for a strong woman: in doing so he places his manhood at risk. From Artegal's perspective, because his reaction to the two women is identical, the actual threat that Radigund poses is also the potential threat of intimacy with Britomart. With the possibility of rescue by Britomart, the threat to Artegal's manhood remains, for to be rescued by a strong woman is just as threatening to male power as being imprisoned by one. As Mary Bowman puts it, "[t]he beauty that wins his love can also entrap him; the martial force that conquers Radigund to set him free can equally be employed to enslave him" (512).

Artegal's relationship with Britomart has an obvious parallel with England's relationship with Elizabeth. If England is to court this warrior woman, what indication is there that its love for her will not lead to its enslavement under Amazon rule--the dire condition warned against by Knox? As Bowman says, " . . . the male fear of female power given frenzied expression in the Amazonian myth was an inevitable force in the Elizabethan court" (522). To counter this threat, Spenser writes an Elizabeth figure who stands opposite the Amazonian--one who does not wield her power in order to overturn the "natural" hierarchy, but in order to strengthen it. While the battle between Britomart and Radigund further establishes their similarity,[53] the difference between them becomes clear once Britomart assumes Radigund's reign. Britomart, finding Artegal disempowered and helpless, mourns his humiliation ("Where is that dreadfull manly looke? (5.7.40.3)) and immediately works to restore him to his former autonomous and strong condition (stanza 41). After she has vested him with armor, she repeats in the public sphere what she has just done in the personal, restoring male rule over Radegone as she has restored Artegal's rule over himself:

> So there a while they afterwards remained,
> Him to refresh, and her late wounds to heale:
> During which space she there as Princess rained,
> And changing all that form of common weale,
> The liberty of women did repeale,
> Which they had long vsurpt; and them restoring
> To mens subiection, did true Iustice deals:
> That all they as a Goddesse her adoring,
> Her wisedome did admire, and hearkened to her loring.
> (5.7.42)

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[53] See 5.7.29: "The trumpets sound and they together run/ With greedy rage . . . ." As the two join in battle, they are virtually indistinguishable, both fighting with a ferocity peculiar to the woman warrior:

> Their dainty parts, which nature had created
> So fair and tender, without staine or spot,
> For other vses, then they them translated;
> Which they now hackt and hewd, as if such vse they hated . . .
> (5.7.29.5-9)

The problem, of course, lies in how, or in what way it is possible for Britomart to place herself (along with the rest of women) in subjugation to male rule. Clearly, Britomart's submission is purely voluntary, establishing beyond a doubt that she will not use her power to master men, but to serve them: from Artegal's perspective, she is fundamentally safe to court. While she reigns then, she rules not as an Amazon, against the divine law, but as one of the exceptions who has been lifted by "the heuens" to "lawfull soueraintie" (5.5.25.9). The shift of emphasis from the law of the earthly norm, which sees men rule over women, to the higher law allowing for divine intervention, allows Britomart to rule over men while still remaining subjected to a higher authority--"the heuens." Under this higher hierarchy, she reigns in Radegone absolutely, stating unilaterally how the kingdom will be. As Shepherd points out, "she doesn't hand over power to Artegall, but she makes the new magistrates swear fealty to him" (24). Indeed, she uses her power to completely rebuild the governance of the land, choosing both its magistrates and its king before stepping down as "Princess."

Not only does Britomart fill the role of Radegone's absolute ruler for a time, but she, apparently, also plays a significant role in the religious mythology of the land. We learn that she becomes a central figure whose appeal extends beyond the political so that she acts as a mediator of the divine. In 5.7.42 (quoted above), we find that the people of Radegone treat her as a goddess-teacher figure, as both a political and a spiritual guide. This, of course, recalls Elizabeth's appropriation of the veneration of the Virgin Mary in the formerly Roman Catholic England. This elevation to semi-divine status serves to distinguish further Britomart/Elizabeth from women in general and to cement the idea of her rule being a divinely appointed exception ultimately leading not to the dissolution of patriarchy, but to its affirmation. As Pamela Benson (1985) argues, the episode of Britomart vs. Radigund and its idea of the exceptional woman ruler adheres to Calvinist ideas, put most succinctly by Calvin himself in a letter to William Cecil. He says of female government

> that as it was a deviation from the original and proper order of nature, it was to be ranked, no less than slavery, among the punishments consequent upon the fall of man; but that there were occasionally women so endowed, that the singular good qualities which shone forth in them, made it evident that they were raised up by divine authority; either that God designed by such examples to condemn the inactivity of men, or for the better setting forth of his own glory.[54]

By using the fundamentally patriarchal language of Calvinist theology Spenser writes a woman ruler whose reign has been appointed by God. She can then be both completely trusted not to usurp the position of men and simultaneously praised for her greatness as a sovereign.[55] As importantly, Spenser has shown Elizabeth's role as queen and her claimed role as lover being acted out together in Britomart. In the end, the evidence of Elizabeth's divine appointment is her love for her nation, which is both her realm and her spouse. The example of Britomart reflects Elizabeth's ultimate deference to patriarchal authority, even if she would be fashioned by some as an Amazon.

Courting Country

Though the idea of "courting country" does not have the textual presence within *The Faerie Queene* that the courting of the queen does, recent scholarship (particularly that of Louis Montrose and Linda Woodbridge) has pointed to a connection in Elizabethan culture between the queen and the country that is worth investigating. As

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[54] Letter XV in *The Zurich Letters* (second series), trans. Rev. Hastings Robinson, Cambridge: 1845, pp. 34-35. Quoted in Benson, 1985, p. 279.

[55] I do not mean for this to be the last word on women and power in FQ. While Benson argues that Spenser consistently follows a Calvinist line of reasoning throughout the poem, it seems to me that there are more questions asked than answered by Britomart's quest (Susanne Woods argues for a "poetics of choice" in which Spenser's handling of Britomart is "genuinely subversive of patriarchal assumptions" (150)) and by Spenser's criticisms of the patriarchal nature of the writing of history (3.2.1-3). I agree with Bowman that the incident with Radigund and Britomart "reveals a great deal about Spenser's view of the particular female monarch that he had to deal with, in one way or another, with or without a general theory about female rule" (518), that is, that Spenser starts with Elizabeth and writes a mythology to suit her and the current situation.

England waited the attack of the Armada, the invasion of Catholic Spain and Parma, Elizabeth, in her speech at Tilbury, followed her claim to have "the heart of a king," with

> and [I] think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any Prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realms; to which, rather than any dishonor grow by me, I myself will take up arms . . . .
> (Osborne, 11)

The comparison here of an invasion of England by a foreign country to the rape of Elizabeth by a foreign prince draws on an idea deeply bound in Elizabethan culture, having to do both with the evolution of the modern state as well as with the unusual occurrence of a woman sovereign almost venerated for her virginity. As Montrose argues in "Elizabethan Subject," part of the conceptual transition from medieval to modern government came in moving from the theological doctrine of the universal body of Christ, the collective *corpus mysticum,* to the modern idea of the state as a public power operating within a defined territory, separate of both ruler and ruled. Montrose says:

> During the second half of the sixteenth century, the monarchical claim to supreme authority within its territories was already securely established both in theory and practice, while formulations of the modern conception of the state as a corporate abstraction had only just begun. At this historical juncture, the body politic inhered in the body of the prince.
> (307)

The idea of Elizabeth embodying not only her natural body, but also, by extension, the body politic, is communicated in the Ditchley portrait (Osborne). This portrait shows Elizabeth standing on a map of England, the sun to her front, a dark storm to her back. Woodbridge, in her article "Palisading the Body Politic," points out the interaction in the painting between the woman and the island: "jewels carbuncling her dress resemble in color and distribution the map's towns and forests, and the south coast below her feet disconcertingly resembles toes" (282). The iconography here suggests that the body of the queen and the body of the island are somehow interconnected, even that they are one.

Both Montrose and Woodbridge refer to the cross-cultural thesis of anthropologist Mary Douglas concerning the potential of the body's boundaries to represent any boundaries "which are threatened or precarious" (115). Douglas argues that often in cultures which guard the orifices of the body zealously against unsanctioned penetration, the body acts as a symbol of the society itself. Thus, she finds "the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body" (115). Woodbridge further explains:

> By Douglas's theory, a society bound up in pollution beliefs and obsessed with protecting orifices should be a society endangered, besieged, vulnerable at its margins. What could more accurately describe Elizabethan England, a second-rate military power in perennial danger from great powers like Spain, a Protestant country obsessed with the threat of papal takeover and nourishing a paranoid certainty that foreign Jesuit infiltrators were penetrating every available national orifice? . . . Elizabethan England had a sense of herself as an island, perpetually threatened with invasion but defended by her liminal zone, the sea. (280)

There is a sense, then, of England as a virgin island, paralleling its virgin queen.[56] It is protected both by its "saltwater girdle," the English Channel (Woodbridge 277, 280), and by its military.

The Faerie Queene's concern with the virgin purity of women is obvious. Throughout, Spenser writes female figures who are either virginal and good or promiscuous and evil.[57] Not only is this dichotomy rigorously held to, but it forms much of the basis of the poem's action: both in that the successful knight must distinguish between the two types of women and ally himself with the good, and also that the forces of evil constantly attempt to penetrate virginal females. In this way, the knights of *The Faerie Queene,* and by extension, the gentlemen that Spenser would fashion, are responsible both to recognize and to protect virginal purity. Though there are countless examples of this through the poem, I will limit my discussion to Book I, for here the relationship between virginity and the realm is present.[58] The Red Cross Knight's task is to accompany Una to her realm and to defeat the dragon that is there. However, midway through the first canto we find that fighting the dragon is to be only the last stage of this adventure, and that the Red Cross Knight must learn to discern the truly virtuous and virginal woman. His mistaking of Archimago's spright for Una (1.2.5) demonstrates that the most well-intentioned and passionate believer in virginity may be tricked into misrecognition, and that true adherence requires depth of spiritual insight coming only to those with mature devotion. The Red Cross Knight's move from attachment to virginal Una to that with promiscuous Duessa is a move from "Truth" to "faire falshood" (1.2.Argu.); he is soon given over to promiscuity himself (1.7.6-7), and is as a result imprisoned by Orgoglio (1.7.8-15). Una, on the other hand, experiences danger in the form of rape. Without the Red Cross Knight there to protect her, Sansloy leads her

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[56] Douglas's thesis explores how "rituals work upon the body politic through the symbolic medium of the physical body" (128). Of course, the resistance to foreign penetration in Elizabethan England has to be seen as being considerably more complex than this. While the parallel between the queen and her land had been drawn, the importance of virginity in Christian Europe goes back far earlier than the Elizabethan military circumstance. In this case it does not seem right to talk about one body being the medium of the other, but rather, to examine the interaction between them as parallel structures.

[57] Male figures are allowed to occupy the middle space--see RCK's transgression with Duessa. Perhaps they are treated differently because they cannot be penetrated and therefore cannot be polluted in the totalizing way that a female figure can be.

> into a forest wilde,
> And turning wrathful fire into lustfull heat,
> With beastly sin thought her to haue defilde,
> And made the vassall of his pleasures vilde.
> (1.6.3.2-5)

Though "Eternall prouidence" (1.6.7.1) intervenes, providing faunes and satyres to protect Una, the implication is clearly that a virgin woman needs a knight to protect her.[59]

When the Red Cross Knight finally matures into a deeper understanding of himself and his quest, he faces his ultimate challenge, the dragon he has been sent to kill. Significantly, the Red Cross Knight's task is to free Una and her city equally from the threat of penetration. The dragon has the city under seige: he seeks to penetrate its borders, just as he would penetrate Una (in the most complete way, by devouring her). When the Red Cross Knight kills the dragon the king's first action is to order open the gate:

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[58] Book I is the only book of the poem in which a central court is actually reached as the completion of a quest. While Red Crosse's defense of Una's kingdom provides a relatively tiny proportion of *The Faerie Queene* as an example of the "courting of country," I take it to be part of a larger pattern in the poem. Were the poem finished, one can reasonably assume that it would culminate in arrival at the court of the faerie queene, and the final battle between the forces of the queen and the knights of the "paynim" enemy. I am reading the end of Book I then as indicative of the projected end of the poem.

[59] While Britomart, as a virgin, is an obvious exception to this rule, even she, as a knight, is called to protect Amorette.

> He bad to open wyde his brazengate,
> Which long time had bene shut, and out of hond
> Proclaymed ioy and peace through all his state . . .
> (1.12.3.6-8)

The gate that prevented evil penetration is no longer necessary now that the Red Cross Knight has established control over the land. The king now welcomes him to enter the long guarded portal, and, just as the gate is now opened, so is Una's virginity. Significantly, the king gives "Both daughter and eke kingdom" (1.12.20.9) to the Red Cross Knight as one reward. He has protected both woman and city from invasion, and in doing so has successfully courted both.

Conclusion: Courting *The Faerie Queene*

In my movement from a Biblical hermenuetic approach in my first chapter to a type of New Historicist approach in my final one I have been keenly aware of myself as a reader. This awareness is particularly apt in light of Spenser's wish for a "courteous reader." If there is such a thing as being a courteous reader of *The Faerie Queene* today, then it is certainly different than what Spenser intended, but the question remains: in the present, can "courteous reader" be a useful designation at all? My first chapter probably comes closest to what Spenser would have considered a courteous reading. Here, I accept the text according to what I shall call its intent. I accept that it has been written for my spiritual elucidation, and read it in order to uncover the truths it contains. While reading it with this intent, I willfully avoid criticisms against the text in order to emphasize what it accomplishes.[60] My reading shifts in Chapter Two from what Spenser intends to what the text contains. While my reading in Chapter One can be clearly seen to pertain to Spenser's goal of "fashioning a gentleman," the events examined in Chapter Two do not easily fall into any such larger purpose. To what extent the psychological tension between Britomart and Artegal is the result of Spenser's (inter-)personal experience, the imitation of Ariosto, or the influence of other ideas of English culture cannot be measured exactly, but that tension speaks of something that eludes containment within a didactic purpose. I read it as a force that flows through the text in a way more fashioning than fashioned: as a dynamic that Spenser, as an artist, has captured rather than designed.

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[60] My most strongly felt criticism of Book I has been its use of the saint/whore dichotomy imposed, by implication, on womanhood in general. While Una and Duessa make useful metaphors for two different ways of living, they are fundamentally perverse as categories describing real women.

While the reading that I give *The Faerie Queene* in my second chapter does not move against the text, and so is probably not a "discourteous" reading, the New Historicist reading of Chapter Three comes only a short step from Elizabethan treason. While in Chapter One I have accepted Spenser's didactic voice unchallenged in order to concentrate upon what it says, Chapter Three examines one aspect of what underlies that voice--the politics of Elizabeth. Here the structure of the totalizing world view that Spenser draws upon in *The Faerie Queene* is itself interrogated, and many of its supports seem very creaky from the twentieth century. I have refrained from making a judgment on Spenser's participation in the political structures of his day, preferring to limit my study to how *The Faerie Queene* interacts with contemporary political culture. Yet to some extent, a judgment is required. There are those who describe Spenser as a psychophant, engaging in the economy of power and priviledge in order to make personal gains. On the other side, there are those who read Spenser as a visionary, providing a moral and spiritual ideal for an entire nation, including its ruler, to follow. In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning,* Stephen Greenblatt examines the political, and specifically, the colonial nature of Spenser's poetry ("To Fashion a Gentleman," 157-93). He concludes that Spenser engages in "the final colonialism, the colonialism of language, yoked to the service of a reality forever outside itself" (192). He argues that Spenser subjugates his poetry to the reality of Elizabethan rule with all of its repression and brutality. While Greenblatt is commendably honest in recognizing destructive and enclosing aspects of Elizabethan culture and *The Faerie Queene,* his reading is limited by his materialist approach. With his approach, everything seems finally to derive from the will to power and self-advancement through subjugation of others.[61] John Wall, in *Transformations of the Word,* allows room for both Spenser's political devotion and his spiritual devotion and arrives at a much different judgment of Spenser. While Greenblatt sees only *The Faerie Queene's* service of Elizabethan hegemony, Wall places this service within Spenser's larger Christian vision. Thus, he sees Spenser's subjugation of his poetry not as the colonization of words, but as the proper use of a divine gift.[62]

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[61] While Greenblatt's sensitivity to the uses of power to subjugate allows him to address the condition of the marginalized, I am concerned that he judges too readily those he sees as being in the center.

In the end, the variation between Greenblatt's and Wood's readings of Spenser's servitude leads to widely different conclusions about the poet. While Spenser's lavish praise of Elizabeth seems to indicate his wholesale acceptance of Elizabethan government for his personal gain,[63] Wood finds in this praise not cow-towing, but a transforming vision. He says:

> . . . "praise" of Elizabeth, either directly in the prefaces or indirectly through praise of of the figures of Una, Belphoebe, and Britomart, functions not to describe Elizabethbut to encourage her to take her own part in this transformation of English society by spelling out for her the kind of behavior that would further that end in terms of a rhetorical scheme that would allow her to shape her behavior according to those models without having to admit that she had not already been doing so. (123)

As Maureen Quilligan (1987) notes, writing about the queen required extreme care. Writing which the queen did not consider flattering could result in the loss of a hand (as in the case of the "too-aptly named" John Stubbs (157)). The practice of attempting the transformation of a ruler through praise was outlined by Erasmus, whose idea was to present princes

> with a pattern of goodness, in such a way as to reform bad rulers, improve the good, educate the boorish, reprove the erring, arouse the indolent, and cause even the hopelessly vicious to feel some inward stirrings of shame.[64]

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[62] Both Greenblatt and Wall discuss Spenser's repeated claims as to the limitations of his own poetry. Greenblatt argues that these claims produce a safe boundary between the fallible poem and its absolute subject--Elizabeth. Hence, an exchange by Spenser of poetic integrity for political power. Wall, however, while reading the claims as a political move, sees their motivation as religious. He argues that Spenser's aim was to "force his reader to confront the nature of language as customarily used, to find language inherently false, inherently duplicitous . . . " (119) and to show that language becomes divinely useful only when it confesses its limitations.

[63] Karl Marx memorably summarized this view, calling Spenser *"der Elizabeths Arschkissende Poet,"* or "Elizabeths arse-kissing poet." See *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, "Marx and Spenser," p 457-8.

[64] Letter to Jean Desmarez (Mynors, 1974, vol. 2, p 81), quoted in Wall, p 123

The use of praise to set a moral example was a practical necessity in the Renaissance. This of course does not negate Greenblatt's argument, for praising the queen (whatever one's purpose) was materially beneficial. In the end, it is impossible to ignore either Greenblatt's or Wall's argument without limiting one's perspective. While I much prefer to read Spenser as a visionary than as a political manipulator, my reading also does not depend on his perfection or sainthood. Ignoring him as a person of gender, class, nationality, and economic status cannot be an option in today's critical environment. Possibly though, the answer to the question of the courteous reading lies in the literary thinking of Spenser's own time. As I have argued in my last chapter, *Thr Faerie Queene* calls the reader to court queen and country, protecting them from aggressors, and treating them with love and devotion. The same qualities that make queen and country dependent on a protector/lover--those of vulnerability and purity--are claimed by the poem itself. *The Faerie Queene* is a text that asks to be courted.

Notably, *The Faerie Queene* begins and ends with encounters with beasts who battle by means of the false use of words, or monsters of dissemination. Erroure, in Book I, Canto i, battles Red Crosse in part by vomiting poison, including books:

> Therewith she spewd out of her filthy maw
> A floud of poyson horrible and blacke,
> Full of great lumps of flesh and gobbets raw,
> Which stunck so vildly, that it forst him slack
> His grasping hold, and from her turn him back:
> Her vomit full of bookes and papers was,
> With loathly frogs and toades, which eyes did lacke,
> And creeping sought way in the weedy gras:
> Her filthy parbreake all the place defiled has.
> (20)

The words which come out of Erroure's mouth are not bound by truth; they flow uncontrolled, polluting the entire environment. This uncontrolled profusion of words is dangerous, threatening to overwhelm Red Crosse, forcing "him slack" his hold on her throat. He soon recovers, however, and puts an end to the poisonous words by destroying the dragon. In this opening episode the relationship between the poem and its subject is clear. The poem circumscribes the activity of Erroure, and for all its threat, fashions its demise. Six books later, however, the relationship between the poem and the uncontrolled use of words becomes infinitely tangled, and the poem becomes the victim of its subject. Here, the dragon Erroure (of which the mouth was only one part) has been superceded by a creature which is all mouth, the Blatant Beast. This beast has "a thousand tongs" (6.12.27.1), all of which speak hateful words continually and wildly. Significantly, this beast is the subject of the only unfulfilled immediate quest of the poem,[65] and is what Ronald Bond describes as the "[e]pitome and culmination of intractable evil in *The Faerie Queene*" (96). Though he is bound for a time, the Blatant Beast breaks through, not only out of his bonds, but through the boundary of fiction, into the present tense and the world of metafiction. *The Faerie Queene* ends:

> So now he raungeth through the world againe,
> And rageth sore in each degree and state;
> Ne any is, that may him now restraine,
> He growen is so great and strong of late,
> Barking and biting all that him doe bate,
> Albe they worthy blame, or cleare of crime:
> Ne spareth he most learned wits to rate,
> Ne spareth he the gentle Poets rime,
> But rends witout regard of person or of time.
>
> Ne may this homely verse, of many meanest,
> Hope to escape his venemous despite,
> More than my former writs, all were they clearest
> From blamefull blot, and free from all that wite,
> With which some wicked tongues did it backebite,
> And bring into a mighty Peres displeasure,
> That neuer so deserued to endite.
> Therfore do you my rimes keep better measure,
> And seeke to please, that now is counted wisemens threasure.
> (6.12.40,41)

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[65] I refer here to the quests that the titular heros set out on, for example, Red Crosse's quest to free Una's land, or Britomart's quest to find Artegal. Though these quests tend to lead to larger, unfulfilled goals, they are fulfilled in their immediate sense. Calidore, whose task at the outset was to bind the Blatant Beast, is the only titular knight to simply fail.

The Faerie Queene ends with Spenser's admitance of his poem's vulnerability to the reader and to society.[66] Like the queen he fashions in his poem, his poem itself requires the courteous reception, and if you will, courting of its audience. Wall says that the open-ended quality of the poem both demands the reader's response and becomes intelligible in light of that response (119). What this all comes down to for me as a reader of the poem is this: that the text is vulnerable to attack from many sides and that looking to it as an acurate reflection of life requires a certain faith in it, perhaps just the kind of faith that New Historicism does not leave room for. For me, courting *The Faerie Queene* does not mean the wholesale acceptance of Spenser's politics or philosophy. Rather, it has been a process of conversation, an interaction with a rich and vibrant text. I have come to know why I like it and why I do not, and, above all, have trusted it enough to enter into its story and into its world and find myself there.

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[66] For a discussion of the particular vulnerability of the Renaissance text see"Erasmus' 'Festina lente': Vulnerabilities of the Humanist Text" from *The Vulnerable Text* by Thomas M. Greene. Greene discusses the movement from a celebration of the printed word as a wide-scale means of communicating truth, to disillusionment at "a swarm of lesser printers . . . who print and circulate anything" (8), reminding one of the Blatant Beast.

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